

BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JULY-AUGUST 2001



A vintage circus poster with a light blue background. At the top, the text "HAGENBECK'S" is written in large, arched, brown letters, with "TRAINED ANIMALS." in smaller, blue, block letters below it. In the center, a lion is depicted in mid-leap, its body arched over a dark brown horse with a white blaze on its face. The horse is galloping to the left, carrying a red saddle. To the right of the horse stands a circus ringmaster in a dark, ornate uniform with red accents and a top hat. He holds a thin stick or whip. In the background, a portion of a red and gold striped circus tent is visible. At the bottom of the poster, the text "MIDWAY PLAISANCE" is written in blue, slanted letters, followed by "WORLD'S FAIR." in large, bold, red letters. Below this, in smaller black text, it reads "MUSEUM AND MENAGERIE OPEN DAY AND EVENING. THREE GRAND PERFORMANCES DAILY."

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TRAINED
ANIMALS.

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WORLD'S FAIR.
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FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor Emeritus

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THE FRONT COVER

The Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal Show appeared on the midway of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

Special posters were printed to advertise the attraction. The one on the cover is a half sheet. It was printed by the Shober & Carqueville Lithograph Co. of Chicago. The original is in the Pfening Archives.

THE BACK COVER

This is the back cover of the 1905 Carl Hagenbeck Circus courier. It shows scenes from the Hagenbeck show at the St. Louis world's fair in 1904. The courier was printed by the United States Lithographing Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio.

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2001 CHS ELECTIONS

2001 is a quadrennial election year for CHS trustees and officers.

Five of CHS's nine trustee positions are up for election. The new terms will be for eight years each. The incumbents presently holding

those five positions are Fred Dahlinger, Jr., John H. McConnell, Fred D. Pfening, Jr., John F. Polacsek, and Robert F. Sabia. Each has expressed a desire to serve for a new eight-year term.

At their annual meeting in Baraboo, Wisconsin on July 8, 2001 the Board of Trustees, acting as a committee of the whole, nominated each of said five to serve as a Trustee for a new eight year term. Members will elect trustees via the mailed ballot. (See postcard insert.) Each member may vote either for the nominee or a person the member desires to write-in. To be counted, a write-in vote must be cast for a current CHS member.

Officer positions must also be filled this year. The Trustees at their said annual meeting decided to use their discretion under Section 5.02(b) of CHS's Code of Regulations and submit the election of new officers to the membership. The Trustees then nominated Al Stencell, Robert F. Sabia, and Dave Price to serve four-year terms as, respectively, President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The Code of Regulations requires that these officers also be trustees. Al Stencell and Dave Price are already serving trustee terms that will expire in 2005, contemporaneously with their proposed new 4-year terms as officers. Robert Sabia is nominated to serve a new 8-year term as Trustee.

Members will also elect officers via the mailed ballot. Each member may vote either for the nominee or a person the member desires to write in. To be counted, a write-in vote for an officer must be cast for a current CHS member, must be for a person who is already serving as a trustee, is nominated for such a position, or is written-in as a trustee who wins that position.

Guy J. Fioranza will serve as Election Commissioner. A ballot must be received on or before November 15, 2001. The outcome will be announced in the November-December issue of *Bandwagon*.

DAVID WATT INSTALLMENT

Due to space restrictions in this issue an installment of David Watt will not appear. It will resume in the next *Bandwagon*.



ARTHUR M. CONCELLO

March 26, 1911-July 4, 2001

One of the most outstanding showmen of modern times, Arthur M. Concello was a success as a performer, manager and circus owner.

Arthur Vas Concello was born in Starbuck, Washington on March 26, 1911, a descendant of Portuguese heritage. His father was a machinist for the Union Pacific Railroad. The Vas was dropped name. At age three the family moved to Bloomington, Illinois where Arthur received his education.

In his early teens Concello began training on the trapeze at the Y.M.C.A. At the time the Ward family owned a training barn in Bloomington. Concello began his aerial trapeze training with the Ward family. At age sixteen Concello joined the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. In 1929 he had a flying trapeze act on Sells-Floto. In 1930 the Flying Concellos were with Robbins Bros. Circus. Always the crafty businessman, Concello had began his fortune and saved a tidy sum. It was rumored that he helped Fred Buchanan get his Robbins show on the road in 1930. During the early 1930s Concello worked winter Shrine dates for Orrin Davenport.

He bought the Ward training barn in Bloomington and trained his various trapeze acts there.

Pat Valdo brought the Flying Concellos to the Ringling-Barnum Circus in the early 1930s. By the then Concello and his wife Antonette were both turning triple somersaults. They were a center ring attraction on the big one through the 1941 season. During his years on Ringling Concello controlled all of the major flying trapeze acts on the larger circuses.

In 1942 John Ringling North made Concello general manager of his circus. He remained in that position through the 1942 season. Leaving the Ringling show when Robert

Ringling had control he bought the Russell Bros. Circus and toured the show as Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus, using rail equipment and wagons from the Beckmann and Gerety carnival.

In 1946 he hired Clyde Beatty and changed the title to the Clyde Beatty Circus. The 1946 season was very successful, making a large amount of money on a tour of Canada. He then sold the show to Clyde Beatty.

Concello returned to the Ringling-Barnum Circus, loaning a sizable amount of money to North as he bought the show from his family. An interest in the ownership went along with the deal.

In 1948 Concello had a number of grandstand seat wagons built which he leased and later sold to the circus. The following year additional seat wagons were added for the general admission seats. Concello introduced other mechanical improvements to the Ringling show.

In 1954 he left Ringling and his interest in the show was bought back by John North. Following the under canvas closing of the Ringling show in 1956 Concello was brought back and he framed the the 1957 Ringling show on trucks. He designed the open air aerial rigging for the show.

Concello resigned again from Ringling in 1960. The cigar smoking circus man spent the rest of his retirement in Sarasota. For a number of years he operated a taxi business in Sarasota. His office was in a building in front of the circus coaches he owned.

Arthur M. Concello died on July 4, 2001. He was survived by his wife Margaret and son Randall. He was cremated and no services were held.- Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

"And the lion will lay down with the lamb": Carl Hagenbeck's Visions of Paradise

By Nigel Rothfels

This paper was presented at the 2000 Circus Historical Society convention.

On a visit to Wisconsin in the early 1990s, I found myself in a conversation with my wife's ninety-something-year-old grandmother Laureen. She asked what I was writing my dissertation about and I said something about a man from Hamburg, Germany, named Carl Hagenbeck. "Hagenbeck!" she said. "Oh, I remember him." Having lived most of her life around Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Laureen recalled with pleasure the annual arrival of the Hagenbeck circus and the bathing of the elephants in Lake Winnebago. Even if Laureen's memories were rooted, in fact, in the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus—an organization that had at most a disputed connection to the real Carl Hagenbeck—that a woman in her mid nineties who had never lived outside central Wisconsin would easily recall the name of Hagenbeck suggests just how broad the influence of Carl Hagenbeck once was. But if Laureen remembered the name, it conjured only a general idea for her, an idea of elephants and camels, tents and wonder. In this, she shared a rather common sense for Hagenbeck which was perhaps best described by a German author in the 1940s when he noted that "Hagenbeck is not a proper name, but rather, like Alaska or the Wild West, the expression of a mysterious, unexplored land where one yearns for adventure."

After working intensely now for over ten years with the history of Carl Hagenbeck, I can say that I believe I have slowly



Carl Hagenbeck, animal importer and trainer. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.

come to see him as "proper name;" I've also come to see more clearly that difference between what we

Zebras in the Hagenbeck Tierpark, or Animal Park, in Hamburg, Germany.



might think of as the real Carl Hagenbeck and just the stories which have been told about him. Tonight, I want to focus on just one of the stories of Carl Hagenbeck, and I want to cast a little doubt on that story. I'm doing this not because historians seem to take a sort of unnatural pleasure in debunking what a great many people believe as true, but because Hagenbeck, like Barnum, was a great propagandist, and it is part of the job of an historian to look carefully at the stories people tell of themselves. It might also be, of course, that what I'm going to argue tonight is simply what many of you have long believed anyway—we'll see.

But who, or perhaps what, is Hagenbeck. Today, at least in Germany if not in Fond du Lac Wisconsin, Hagenbeck means the beautiful zoological garden in Hamburg; a place which opened in 1907 and which most zoo historians concede as *the* revolutionary zoo of the twentieth century. But if we go back a hundred years or so, the name "Hagenbeck" signaled a great deal more than just an innovative zoo.

The cornerstone of Hagenbeck's diverse business interests—in fact, a cornerstone laid in the middle of the nineteenth century—was the company's status as the undisputed leader in the capture, import, and export of exotic animals to collectors around the world. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, more than anything else "Hagenbeck" connoted "animal catcher." But Hagenbeck's interests soon

expanded far beyond catching animals. First, in a decisively important move, the company embarked in the 1870s on a parallel venture of procuring indigenous people from Africa, Russia, India, the Arctic, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas and presenting *them* in highly profitable spectacles throughout Europe. Then, while continuing his profitable trade in animals *and* people, Hagenbeck began to experiment more and more with training animals for performance and eventually experimented (repeatedly, I might add) with operating a full circus.¹ Only finally some sixty years after the beginning of the Hagenbeck animal business did the firm open its now famous zoo. Indeed, Hagenbeck's Tierpark, or Animal Park, should really be understood as the logical extension or conclusion of the various branches of the family enterprise, because there the firm's animal business, exhibitions of people, and performing animal acts, found a permanent home in a setting which dramatically demonstrated Hagenbeck's truly revolutionary ideas about exhibition. At this new zoo, with its landscapes of animals, a new way of imagining captivity found its beginning; the animals and people on exhibit at Hagenbeck's—separated from each other by hidden moats, and yet organized into seamless landscape views—appeared to be living in the wilds of Africa or India even though they were actually on display at a zoo in northern Germany.

But this is a conference about circuses, so let me turn away from the longer history of Hagenbeck to focus more closely on the history of the Hagenbeck circus, or rather circuses because there have been many authentic incarnations including versions which toured in 1887-1889, 1893-1895, 1904, 1910, and 1913-1914. Additionally, after Carl Hagenbeck's death, the family revived the circus repeatedly, first in the late teens and twenties under his son, Lorenz Hagenbeck's direction, and then again in the

late 1940s under the direction of two of his grandson's, Fritz Wegner and Erich Hagenbeck. But to start, let's revisit the story of the early and probably most important Hagenbeck ventures into the circus as that story has been handed down to us repeatedly by chroniclers of the company (among whom, of course, was Carl Hagenbeck himself).²

According to the story, a perplexing legacy of one of Hagenbeck's large exhibitions of people—in this case a "Ceylon" show—was a large herd of elephants with no immediate buyer. Stuck with the elephants, the equipment from the show, and a large assortment of artifacts, and having already visited the large exhibition halls of Europe, Hagenbeck, we are told, hit upon the idea of organizing a traveling big-top circus after the American fashion. The large tent, he thought, would give the show a new flexibility and allow the old exhibit to travel to cities for which such a show would be quite a new event. Thus, with a group of 20 performers from Ceylon, a range of other artistes, groups of trained animals, and a herd of working elephants, "Carl Hagenbeck's International Circus & Singhalese-Caravan" opened in Hamburg in 1887 and toured for two years.

Throughout this period, Hagenbeck tells us, he was continually frustrated by what he called the "rabble" associated with the circus world and its performers. Writing in his memoirs in 1908—shortly after running into legal difficulties with his American partners in another circus

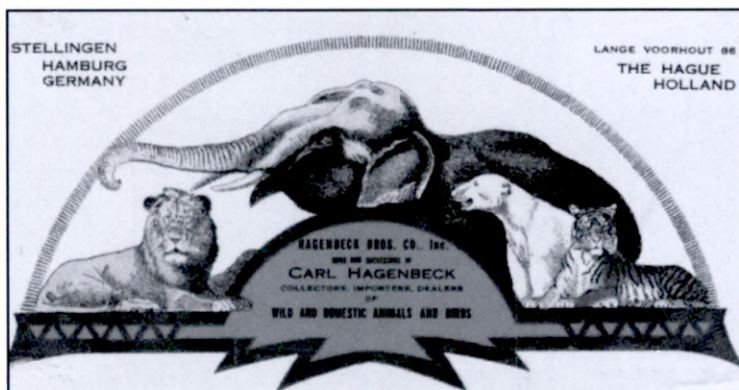
enterprise which lead eventually to the establishment of the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus³—Hagenbeck simply concluded that "with these people it is difficult to come out even; fidelity and trust do not live in their hearts."⁴ After repeated disasters, including an episode in Munich in 1888 in which eight of his elephants panicked during a parade and stormed through the city, injuring hundreds of people and even killing several, Hagenbeck sold the properties of his first circus in 1889.

But already in 1889, and despite the ignominious closure of his first circus, Hagenbeck, with the help of his brother Wilhelm, had debuted his newest attraction—a group of four lions trained, he claimed, in an absolutely new way which put aside, in his words, the "old, cruel methods of training animals."⁵ Over the years, he argued, he had arrived at the conviction that "animals are creatures like us and their intelligence is different from ours only in degree and strength, but not in type. They react to meanness with meanness, and to friendship with friendship." Hagenbeck concluded that "through love, kindness, and perseverance, paired with discipline, one can get more out of an animal than through raw force."⁶ Hagenbeck wanted, the story goes, to do away with the whip, club, red-hot irons, pistols, and metal bars by carefully selecting animals that seemed to have an aptitude for learning tricks, training them through praise and bits of meat, and only occasionally reprimanding them with a whip when the animals became sloppy or careless.

According to Hagenbeck, between 1887 and 1889 he worked with over

twenty lions before settling on four for intensive training. These lions were trained to perform a series of remarkable acts, at the close of which, Hagenbeck noted, "the tamer drove a two-wheeled cart—resembling the form of an ancient Roman chariot—which was pulled by three lions four times in full

Hagenbeck's Stellingen letterhead used around 1900.



gallop around his new forty-foot in diameter circular cage—a sensational number.”⁷ From 1889 to 1892 the lions toured Europe with great success while Hagenbeck and his assistants continued training other groups. More than the traveling circus, it seems, the lions were a highly profitable undertaking and, Hagenbeck argued, the act became one of the most lucrative activities of his whole business.⁸

The success of the lions encouraged Hagenbeck to train more groups of large animals and to begin to prepare a large show for the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. What began as an exciting idea, however, ran into repeated difficulties. First, Hagenbeck’s premier group of performing animals—including twelve lions, two tigers, a cheetah, two South American sun bears and a polar bear—all died of poisoning from spoiled meat they had eaten during their stay at the Crystal Palace in 1891. Then, when Hagenbeck tried desperately to replace the animals with new shipments of tigers and lions, every one of the young animals arriving in the spring and summer of 1892—at least seven tigers and four lion cubs—died of what Hagenbeck believed was the cholera that began to devastate the human population of Hamburg later that summer. According to Hagenbeck, within a few months he had lost some 70,000 marks worth of animals. Still, with a reserve trained group of lions, tigers, and bears, as well as some 150 primates and a collection of eighty different species of parrots, Hagenbeck arrived in Chicago in the spring of 1893. Unfortunately, the huge building that he and his American partners were constructing on the midway



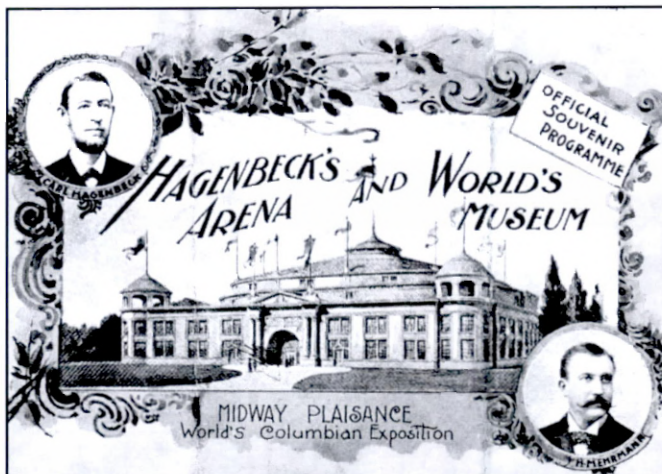
The Hagenbeck animal exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

at a cost of over \$100,000—which was designed, evidently, to accommodate 40,000 people and seat 6,000 for the performances—was not yet complete, and before the exhibition opened Hagenbeck lost an additional \$2,000 worth of animals to inclement weather and poor conditions.

In addition to the animal acts at Hagenbeck’s arena, the presentations included reenactments of historical scenes of Ancient Rome including gladiatorial bouts and Bacchanalian feasts. But the focus

The program cover of the Hagenbeck 1893 Chicago world’s fair show.

ed an assorted group consisting of an elephant, two Shetland ponies, and two boarhounds. Then a Russian clown and trainer named Beketow performed with his “Trained Pigs and Wild Boar.” After Beketow, the “dwarf elephant Lily”—“The Smallest Elephant in the World: The most remarkable Zoological Curiosity of the nineteenth Century”—was introduced. Then came one of Wilhelm and Carl Hagenbeck’s signature acts, “The Equestrian Lion,” in which one of three lions rode a horse around the arena under the guidance of either Ella Johnston, William Philadelphia, or John Penje. The second part of the performance featured the trainer Heinrich Mehrmann. His introduction in the program captures a sense of the stupendous which was, of course, very much a part of these events. The text reads: “The King of Animal Trainers presenting a constellation of Trained Animals, consisting of Lions, Tigers, Panthers, Leopards, Boarhounds, Polar, Sloth and Thibet Bears, all in the same arena and going through a performance the possibility of which can only be realized when witnessed. The degree of perfection to which these Wild Animals are trained is almost past



belief. This performance has been patronized by all the crowned heads of Europe." Mehrmann's performance consisted of twelve set pieces, and I'll list them here because this audience will be able to imagine them:

1. The Bear on the Barrel; 2. Tigers on the Tricycle; 3. Lions on the Tricycle; 4. The Bear on the Tight Rope; 5. The Hurdle Race—Boarhounds leaping over Hurdles which are supported by Lions and Tigers; 6. The See Saw—Performed by Lions, Tigers, Panthers and Bears; 7. The Zoological Staircase—comprising Lions, Tigers, and Boarhounds; 8. The Bengal Tiger on the Rolling Globe; 9. Bear on the Rolling Globe—Walking and rolling same standing on his hind legs; 10. Steeple Chase of the Boarhounds—Leaping over living hurdles of Lions and Tigers; 11. Triumphant Drive of the Lion Prince—Dressed in Royal Robes and Crowned, drawn in his chariot by two Bengal Tigers and having two Boarhounds as footmen; 12. The Great Zoological Pyramid—Consisting of Lions, Tigers, Panthers, Leopards, Bears, and Dogs.⁹

What seems to have repeatedly struck visitors to the Hagenbeck arena, especially in such acts as the evidently startling "Drive of the Lion Prince," were the performances in which diverse animals, though popularly conceived to be mortal enemies, performed together with apparently no enmity between them. As one extravagantly produced souvenir album of the Exposition explained under a photograph of a lion beside a dog titled "The Happy Family": The lessons taught at Hagenbeck's (sic.) menagerie were far outside the ordinary course of study. They embraced illustrations of the power of human kindness and the possibilities of the redemption of animals from their state of ferocity; they proved how the dog (if not the lamb) might lie down with the lion and neither be the worse for the experiment. These little assemblages . . . were the most delightful exhibits the children could obtain on the midway, and no matter how



The steel arena in the Chicago Hagenbeck show.

old those boy and girl auditors may become, they never can or will forget the sensationalism of these continually renewed treaties of peace between man and brute, and brute and man, as given in Hagenbeck's Arena.¹⁰

Indeed, the dominant motifs of this passage—including the "lions lying down" with other animals and the "illustrations of the power of human kindness"—recur throughout reports of Hagenbeck's exhibit in Chicago and clearly represent the focus of the broad public appeal which the show garnered. As a German picture album explained, "Hagenbeck's menagerie proves the fulfillment of the prophecy in that inside the building the lion lies down beside the lamb, and the most defenseless animals, while they couldn't possibly protect themselves, play with all surety with the most vicious beasts."¹¹ Looking back at such descriptions, it seems that the Hagenbeck exhibit in Chicago must represent a significant watershed in the exhibition of performing animals. While it is true that Hagenbeck had been showing the results of his experiments for several years, it was the performances of his animals in

The front of the 1899 Hagenbeck traveling show.



Chicago in front of the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Exposition—and over the next year in New York at Madison Square Garden, Manhattan Beach, and then back at the Garden—that seemed to established his name as one of the great figures in the history of animal training.¹²

For his part, Hagenbeck claimed that his most important innovation lay in his new method for training animals according to their aptitude and through kindness, and it has become something of a habit among Hagenbeck historians, as well as among historians of the circus, to credit Hagenbeck as the major figure in promoting humane methods in training performance animals—methods, it is claimed, he impressed on a group of trainers which includes Eduard Deyerling, Heinrich Mehrmann, Julius Seeth, Richard List, Johann Dudak, Richard Sawade, Fritz Schilling, Willy Peters, Charlie Judge, William Philadelphia, and Julius Wagner.¹³ While this assertion might in some ways be true (Hagenbeck, for example, might well have been more successful than anyone else in convincing the public that his techniques were revolutionary), the statement needs qualifying in at least two important ways. First, while Hagenbeck may, in fact, have both advocated and used gentler methods to train animals, it is also true that not all other animal tamers—despite their popular depictions in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century novels—used brute force and intimidation to train their charges. This point is made clear in the concurrent work Bostock, Wilhelm Hagenbeck, and the Feraris and in many other sources including the 1869 training manual, *Haney's Art of Training Animals*, which pointed out quite matter-of-factly that a great deal more could be achieved through training animals through kindness than through violence. I'll quote here briefly from the manual:

"When [an animal]

knows what you want him to do he will in almost all cases comply with your wishes promptly and cheerfully. For this reason punishments seldom do any good, unless the animal is willful, which is rare. On the contrary they, as a general rule, interfere with the success of the lessons. If the pupil is in constant fear of blows his attention will be diverted from the lesson, he will dread making any attempt to obey for fear of failure, and he will have a sneaking look which will detract materially from the appearance of his performance. This is the case with the animals instructed by a trainer of this city who 'trains his horses with a club,' the animals never appearing as well as those taught by more gentle means. But for a rare natural talent this man's success would have been utterly defeated by his brutality. He is the only one we know of in the profession who does not base his tuition on kindness to the pupil. A sharp word or a slight tap with a small switch will as effectually show your displeasure as the most sever blows. It is both cruel and unwise to inflict needless pain."¹⁴

Second, just as it is not entirely accurate to claim that Carl Hagenbeck came up with his ideas of training animals out of some highly personal and unique understanding of animals, it is also not completely true to say that his trainers did not



The 1899 Hagenbeck traveling animal show letterhead.

find themselves in a profession which often required a good deal of what might well have been called, by the standards of the time, brutal training methods. In an 1883 *Forest and Stream* article, for example, a J. S. W., who had studied with Hagenbeck in Hamburg, argued that intimidation was the stock and trade of the animal trainer and that "the whip is the trainer's chief reliance; and it cannot be used to freely."¹⁵ Similarly, William Philadelphia, who also studied in Hamburg and who worked for Hagenbeck in Chicago and elsewhere recalled his training of the notable lion named "Black Prince" in ways which do not really stand up to Hagenbeck's assertions about using only those animals that showed an aptitude for learning and never using force to train them. According to Philadelphia, who had been charged with the task of raising and taming the cub which had

The Hagenbeck animal exhibit at St. Louis in 1904.

recently arrived from Africa, after days of patient talking to the animal while standing outside its cage.

I went into the cage, carrying a wooden club in each hand. The first time I entered he sprang at my throat, as his fierce instinct taught him to do. I gave him

two or three good raps over the head and flanks, and he went back, not roaring, but making the queer-sounding purr peculiar to young lions. Then he came at me again and again. I used my clubs, but not too hard, avoiding hurting him badly, and being careful not to strike him on the back, for a young lion's back is easily broken. After feeling the club several times he kept away from me, and went into a corner of the cage sulking.¹⁶

After weeks of such training—the retelling of which must have brought back to many *McClure's Magazine* readers the similar beatings suffered by the dog "Buck" in Jack London's *Call of the Wild*—Philadelphia noted,

The wild beast is afraid, not so much of any pain which may be inflicted upon him, but of some vague, unknown power too great for him to understand or cope with. This is what gives the tamer his control of lions and tigers. It is not any personal magnetism or any inherent virtue not possessed by other men. It is no charm of the eye. That idea is clear nonsense. It is merely that one

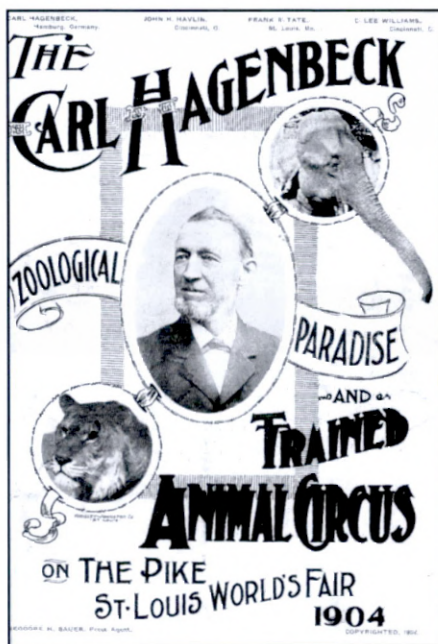


particular man, by untiring patience, has succeeded in making himself appear in the lion's eyes as the one great and boundless force of the universe before which he must bow.¹⁷

To an important degree, Philadelphia's account should be understood as part of his effort to make a powerful impression of himself not simply upon Black Prince but also upon the readers of *McClure's*—after all, the idea of the brutal animal trainer still had a certain romantic appeal. At the same time, however, it seems fairly clear from the ease of his descriptions, that despite Hagenbeck's claims the days were far from over in which the beating of lions, tigers, and bears was a normal part of training regimens.

But if Hagenbeck—and his chroniclers and historians—have repeatedly exaggerated the revolutionary nature of his “new methods” in training animals, he—and they—have almost completely ignored what I believe to be the monumental change which his performing animal troupes did bring to the history of animal exhibition. To understand that change, though, we need to look beyond issues of training and focus instead on the nature of the performances of Hagenbeck's groups. Consider for a moment the difference between Hagenbeck's performances and those of Van Amburgh where, indeed, at least in one notable performance the lion did lay down with the lamb, but only after being thoroughly bludgeoned into submission.¹⁸ Consider, too, the presentations of such figures as John Adams, which while featuring the abiding friendship of Adams and his bear, “Benjamin Franklin,” eventually came to focus on the staging of deadly fights between Adams and assorted bears with “Ben” fighting at his side.¹⁹

To be sure, Hagenbeck's trainers were also frequently characterized as pitting their lives against potentially violent beasts. Nevertheless, when we consider the Hagenbeck performances, with such acts as the “Tiger on the Tricycle” and “The Great Zoological Pyramid” it is clear that the ideas advanced by Hagenbeck's performances represent a quite novel way of imagining animal-animal and



The program issued for the St. Louis Hagenbeck show in 1904.

animal-human interaction. Rather than a lion king dressed in gladiatorial costume subduing the beasts a la Van Amburgh, Heinrich Mehrmann, a former Hamburg businessman, stands quietly in a ring with a business suit as his lion, dressed as a king, is ceremoniously drawn around by a hitch of tigers. Re-viewing the show in Chicago, one writer could only wonder optimistically

Following the 1904 St. Louis show Hagenbeck played Madison Square Garden in New York.

Madison Square Garden
AMPHITHEATRE.

Under the Direction of
THE HAGENBECK ARENA CO., S. M. HOFFHEIMER, Manager
QUEEN CITY PRIVILEGE CO., Publishers, 105 Broadway, New York.

September 3rd to October 10th, 1904.

Hagenbeck's
Trained
Animals.

2 Performances Daily.
AT 8.30 and 9.30 P. M.

Menagerie & Monkey Paradise

OPEN FROM 11 A. M. TO 11 P. M.

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We make nothing
cheap and charge as little
as possible.

It was a morning when
Hagenbeck was walking. The
day was bright and the sun
was shining. There was a
lot of people in the park
and the children were
playing. Hagenbeck was
looking at the children and
he was smiling. He was
a very kind man and he
was very popular with the
children.

A WOMAN'S FA
The long way, appeared
times. If you don't want your
eyes can't look. Don't look at
the children.

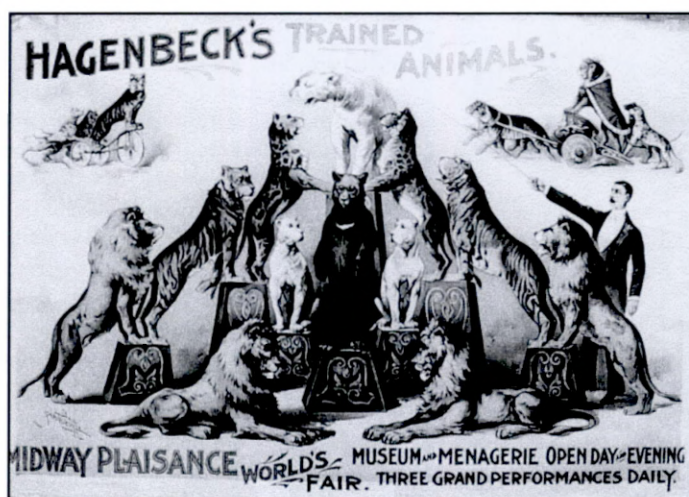
"How does your new act
look?"
"The long way, appeared
times. If you don't want your
eyes can't look. Don't look at
the children."

Polignac says that his
train any expert brilliant
and will be a star.

An engagement ring on
the finger. It is a very
fine ring.

whether “Perhaps history is at fault, and there are grievous errors about human sacrifices to the lions: or perhaps the lions or the kind of men are not he same as two thousand years ago; or, best perhaps of all, the Exposition may have established bonds of peace and unity between man and beast.”²⁰ What was truly remarkable, then, about Hagenbeck's performing animal exhibits was that they tied deeply into a desire in the audience for a highly sentimentalized view of animals both in nature and in captivity. The time-honed contention, brought out by Hagenbeck historians over and over again, that Carl Hagenbeck trained his animals through kindness is really beside the point. In fact, that argument is only one more manifestation—and is perhaps even a necessarily corollary—of an overall image Hagenbeck attempted to convey in his exhibits of performing animals. That image, which fully exploited ideas of the humane trainer walking with confidence among his pupil animals—animals that respect, admire, but more than anything love their keeper—became the dominating image of Carl Hagenbeck and his various enterprises, and especially his Animal Park which opened in 1907. Visiting Hagenbeck's animal exhibits and people shows, visitors were not to be confronted with vicious animals or, even less surprisingly, critiques of capitalism, imperialism, or colonial exploitation; the realms of Hagenbeck were an idealized world where visitors could walk among the exhibited animals and people and feel comfortable, secure, and, of course, enlightened.

At Hagenbeck's Animal Park there is a memorial to Carl Hagenbeck in which the elderly man is portrayed standing with a calm hand resting on his favorite lioness, “Triest,” who, the story goes, threw herself into battle against a suddenly dangerous group of cats in order to protect her keeper during one of his customary visits to the lions' den. As one of Hagenbeck's assistants, noted, “It was touching when [Hagenbeck] spoke of his lioness ‘Triest’ who was devoted to him like a dog. . . . Never did Hagenbeck appear greater among his animals as when the royal lioness



Special lithograph used for the Chicago world's fair.

lay overcome at his feet, not as a slave, but as a friend beside a friend."²¹ At Hagenbeck's grave, "Triest" is seen again lying across her master's tomb; a gigantic representation of fidelity and love.

The task for the historian remains one of emphasis. In looking at the history of the Hagenbecks—whether studying the animal trade, the people exhibitions, the many circuses and individual animal acts, or even the animal park—the historian must behind the various endeavors. Those motivations are rarely simple. It seems, for example, that the two most basic impressions immediately drawn of Carl Hagenbeck are that he was a dealer in animals and that he was a lover of animals. Both of these perspectives tell part of the truth, but alone neither adequately explains the complicated interests and activities of Carl Hagenbeck and his firm. Ever since the late nineteenth century, Hagenbeck and his followers have chosen to concentrate his image into only one readily accessible concept—Hagenbeck as a friend of animals and man. From a man who had made a considerable fortune organizing the capture, purchase, and sale of tens of thousands of animals and people, the company developed a myth of a man who was the ultimate friend of living things, a man whose goal in life was to spread appreciation and understanding among the people who came to his establishments.

Despite these assertions, however,

exhibits had not been popular and, thus, profitable. Carl Hagenbeck did not become the leading animal dealer in the world simply because he loved animals. Nor did he become a successful animal trainer because he was primarily concerned with ameliorating the conditions of animals in circuses. He became these things because he was before anything else a highly innovative entrepreneur who was keenly aware of the desires of his patrons. In the end, Hagenbeck's success rested on his ability to serve that desire, even if doing so necessitated a slight misrepresentation.

While it is completely one-sided when thinking about Hagenbeck—whether one is thinking about his animal acts, his people shows, his animal trade, or his zoo, to conclude that Hagenbeck was a ruthless exploiter whose wealth rested on the corpses of animals—and, in fact people—spread across the globe, it is equally problematic to conclude that Hagenbeck was a modern prophet at whose careful instruction lions somehow naturally lay down beside lambs. Beyond the question of whether we can or should judge Carl Hagenbeck, however, rests the responsibility of serious history to question the ways in which the life of a man, his actions, and his motivations, have been manipulated by those who have followed him to create and perpetuate misleading myths. Through affection, admiration, and loyalty, Hagenbeck has been made into something that he was not, and only when we begin to

the one salient feature linking all of Hagenbeck's ventures involves their entrepreneurial aims. Each branch of the firm became what it was because of its profitability. Carl Hagenbeck would not have continued to organize people shows if the

consider alternative views of Hagenbeck will progress be made in understanding the meaning and importance of his legacy.

Notes

1. Hagenbeck dates his experiments with training animals to the late 1880s. In fact, some level of training appears to have been going on at the establishment for many, many years. What Hagenbeck appears to mean is that he began to deploy his "new ideas" in training in the late 1880s.

2. The most important early sources for information about Carl Hagenbeck and his enterprises include Carl Hagenbeck's autobiography (prepared with the help of Philipp Berges), *Von Tieren und Menschen: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen* (Leipzig, 1908), which appeared in English in 1909 as *Beasts and Men*. Among the biographies of Hagenbeck, the most important are Heinrich Leutemann's *Lebensbeschreibung des Thierhändlers Carl Hagenbeck* (Hamburg, 1887); Wilhelm Fischer's *Aus dem Leben und Wirken eines Interessanten Mannes* (Hamburg, 1896); Alexander Sokolowsky's *Carl Hagenbeck und Sein Werk* (Leipzig, 1928); Ludwig Zukowsky's *Carl Hagenbeck's Reich: Ein Deutsches Tierparadies* (Berlin, 1929); Gfinter H. W. Niemeyer's, *Hagenbeck: Geschichte und Geschichten* (Hamburg, 1972); and the recent *Carl Hagenbeck (1844-1913): Tierhandel und Schaustellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich* by Lothar Dittrich and Annelore Rieke-Müller (Frankfurt a/M: Lang, 1998).

3. It is thanks to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus more than his exhibitions at the world's fairs in Chicago (1893) and St. Louis (1904), that Hagenbeck's name is generally remembered in the United States. The Hagenbeck-Wallace circus, which toured especially the midwest of the United States was part of Hagenbeck's operations in name only. From 1902, Carl Hagenbeck's Trained Animal Show Co., and in 1905 the Carl Hagenbeck Circus and Show Company, were managed by an American partnership and Hagenbeck received none of the profits. The

American partners, a Frank Tate and John Havlin, eventually sold the circus in 1907 to Ben Wallace, a circus man of some repute living in Peru, Indiana. Hearing of the agreement, Hagenbeck cabled Tate and Havlin stating clearly "I protest and never agree to this."

Despite his numerous legal and other efforts over the years, Hagenbeck did not succeed in having his name removed from the operation. For a detailed account, see Fred D. Pfening, Jr. "How Wallace Bought Hagenbeck," *Bandwagon* July-August 1964: 11-12.

4. Hagenbeck, *Von Tieren und Menschen: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen* (1908) 136.

5. Hagenbeck 139. There is some disagreement about whether Wilhelm or Carl should be credited with the new training techniques and the acts themselves. Carl took credit for them, but his account was published after a severe split in the family. The descendants of Wilhelm tend to credit him with the accomplishment. The circus historians, Hans-Rirgen Tiede and Rosemarie Tiede, favor Wilhelm on this issue. See their two part piece, "Wilhelm and Willy Hagenbeck," *King Pole* 120 (September 1998): 6-8 and *King Pole* 121 (December 1998): 24-26. My thanks to Richard Reynolds III of the Circus Historical Society for furnishing me with these articles. My own tendency is to give more credit to Wilhelm, but to recognize as well that in the early years of the experiments with animal training, the two were essentially working together.

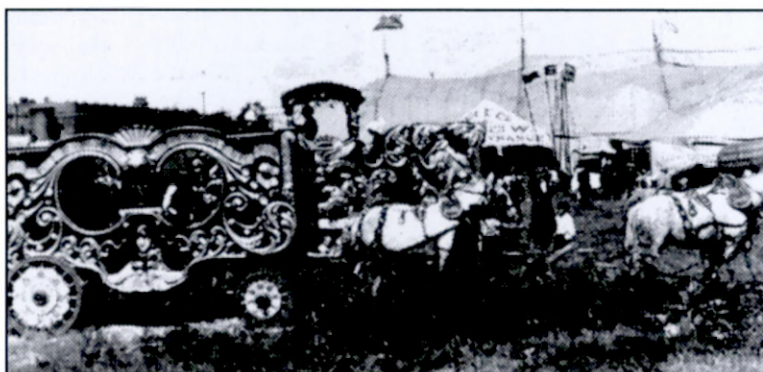
6. Hagenbeck 139.

7. Hagenbeck 143.

8. Hagenbeck 149. *Hagenbeck's Arena and World's Museum*. Official Souvenir Programme. Archives of the Chicago Historical Society.

9. *Hagenbeck's Arena and World's Museum*. Official Souvenir Programme. Archives of the Chicago Historical Society.

10. Midway Types. Photo Album. No date, publisher, or pagination.



The 1905 Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal show.

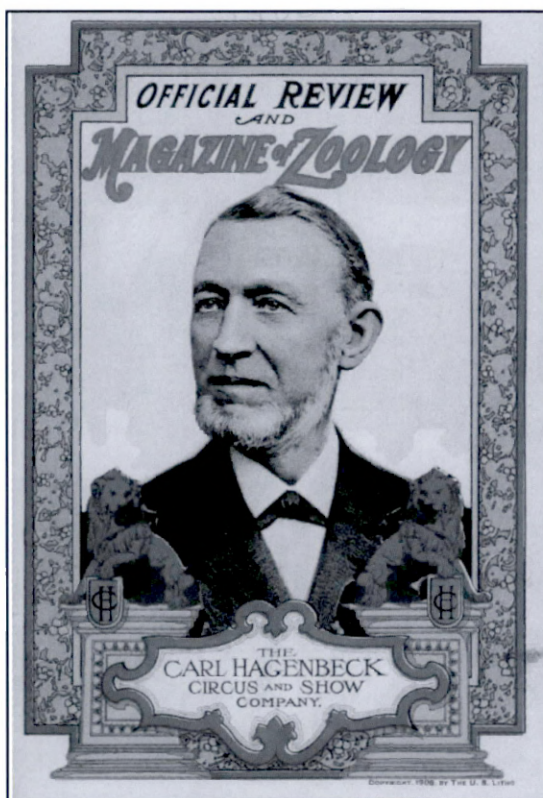
Chicago Historical Society.

11. *Die Illustrierte Welt-Ausstellung*, Chicago, 1893. Das Columbishe Weltausstellungs-Album. Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1893. Unpaginated.

12. For more detail on the history of animal training, if largely only in the American context, see Joanne Carol Joys, *The Wild Animal Trainer in America* (Boulder: Pruett, 1993).

13. Among recent histories which accept Hagenbeck's view of himself, see Joanne Carol Joys 1993 study of

The program of the American owned Carl Hagenbeck Circus in 1905.



the history of training and Lothar Dittrich and Annelore Rieke-Miffler's 1998 history of Hagenbeck. As Rieke-Muller and Dittrich put it, Hagenbeck "was not only the great propagandist of his time for the methods and achievements of training through kindness, he was

seen by many, including many among the press, as its inventor both in Europe and in America." (175-76).

14. *Haney's Art of Training Animals: A Practical Guide for Amateur or Professional Trainers* (New York: Jesse Haney, 1869). This is the same work as the *Art of Training Animals: A Practical Guide for Amateur or Professional Trainers. Giving Full Instructions for Breaking, Taming and Teaching all Kinds of Animals. Including an Improved Method of Horse Breaking . . . Serpent Charming; Care and Tuition of Talking, Singing and Performing Birds; and Detailed Instructions for Teaching All Circus Tricks, and Many Other Wonderful Feats* (New York: H. Sample, 1869).

15. "Notes by a Lion Tamer," *Forest and Stream* XXI.21 (20 December 1883), 408. My thanks to Elizabeth Frank for sending me this article.

16. Cleaveland Moffett, "Wild Beasts and Their Keepers: How the Animals in a Menagerie are Tamed, Trained, and Cared for." *McClure's Magazine* May 1894: 552, 554. While we should be skeptical about accepting either the words of Philadelphia or their quotation in McClure's at face-value, the point is clear that neither Moffett nor Philadelphia appears to have been concerned about depicting training or "taming" as an occasionally violent activity.

17. Moffett, "Wild Beasts and Their Keepers" 556.

18. See Joys 7.

19. For details on Adams' life, see Joys 9-11.

20. Midway Types n.p.

21. Zukowsky 62.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE *Giraffe-Neck Women*

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
and Richard L. Mong

Throughout circus history strange people have been attractions in the American sawdust arenas.

In 1930 the Ringling-Barnum circus displayed a group of natives from the French Congo. These people had large disks in their lips and they were advertised as Ubangi Savages. They were sent to the Al G. Barnes Circus in 1932.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day in 1932 John Ringling and Sam Gumpertz set their sights on the longneck women of Burma as a feature for the 1933 Ringling-Barnum golden anniversary tour.

They dispatched Howard Y. Bary to Burma and bring back some of the longneck women to appear with the Big Show in 1933. Bary set off by ship going by way of Calcutta, India. He journeyed overland through India to a remote region of Burma that was home to the Padaung tribe. He found them and he hired them.

In an interview in the April 4, 1951 *Milwaukee Journal* Bary told of his experience in hiring the Padaung, "Traveling to the village of the Padaungs didn't take courage, it took endurance--endurance to keep spitting the dust out of your mouth and to keep up the continual motion of wiping the dust from your eyes due to the huge dust clouds that rose and swirled around our car as we jolted our way over what natives inappropriately called roads.

"I had an interpreter with me and strict orders from the British bosses not to take any natives out of the country. But little things like that don't stop a circus man; so I entered the Padaung village with the hopeful intention of taking ten giraffe-neck women back to the States with me.

"After a long argument and a liberal donation of grease (circus lingo for money) to the chief, all the



The cover of the 1933 Hagenbeck-Wallace courier. Pfening Archives.

big shots and a lot of other Padaungs who had no right to it, I succeeded in inducing three women and husbands of two of them to go with me.

"I got around the British protectors by paying 15,000 rupees (\$6,000) as a bond guaranteeing the safe return of the five Padaungs within two years. I wired to have everything, passport and boat, ready at the moment I arrived in Rangoon, for I had the uneasy feeling that I was going to have to leave much quicker than I had entered.



"We reached Rangoon, got our passports and got on board ship. I was just about to start a one-man celebration when the Padaungs presented themselves in front of me and announced that they were homesick and didn't want to join the circus after all.

"The Padaungs were all skinny. I wondered what kept them alive with the starving rations that they eked from their country. I sent a hasty order to the ship's chief for the best dinner that he could scramble together on such short order. Then the five Padaungs and I sat down to eat. The Padaungs ate--I didn't have a chance. The food disappeared like magic. That was the first decent food, by American standards, they had ever eaten in their lives. "That night they slept in their first real beds, and in the morning they announced they had changed their minds and wanted to join the circus.

"One of the men in the party was pretty intelligent. He was a school teacher and knew enough pidgin English to act as interpreter. He was the manager of the troupe. I paid him seventy-five rupees a month and the others got one rupee a day.

The two Padaung women on Ringling-Barnum in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.

"They had insisted on bringing their own liquor with them. The Padaungs were no prohibitionists and all of, men and women,



The Padaung women with Bertrum Mills Circus in London. Circus World Museum collection.

demand a heavy slug at least once a day.

They had a hell broth rice wine that is the damnnest stuff I ever tasted. Of course they drank up their supply of home made liquor before we got to America.

"Most of the liquors and wines on the boat did not suit them. It wasn't until they got to this country that they experimented with concoctions of fruit juices, sugar, and rye whisky. They drank a pitcherful every day.

"This began a three-year job of being chaperon to the elongated necks of Berma."

With three women and two husbands in tow, Bary returned in the fall of 1932. He took the group to his farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania for the winter. The Ringling-Barnum press corps presented a different version, claiming the Padaungs had arrived in New York City on April 14, a week after the opening in Madison Square Garden. They had actually been

A group of Padaung women in 2001. Dick Mong collection.



with Bary all winter.

Roland Butler, a most creative Ringling-Barnum press agent and artist, had a field day in publicizing the Burmese ladies. He called them the Giraffe-Neck Women from Burma. He doctored photographs adding photos of large steel springs to extend

the length of their necks.

Butler designed a small booklet about the Padaung long neck women. It was sold on the circus for five cents.

Mu Prao and Mu Ba were with the Ringling show where they were placed on display in the menagerie. Princess Mu-Kaun, the senior member of the group, went to Hagenbeck-Wallace. She was presented on a high wheeled ox cart for a trip around the hippodrome track during each performance.

The Burmese ladies learned a little English, and became the pets of circus personnel.

Following their two years with American circuses, Bary booked them with the Bertrum Mills Circus for the winter season in London. While in England one of the ladies gave birth to a boy, who was raised on baby food. The baby died after the Padaungs returned home, the local food did him in.

What has happened to the Burmese people since their days with the circus over sixty years ago? Over the years little has been heard about them. Had the passing years of civilization and social change through-

out the world caused the Padaung women to slowly do away with their tribal custom of extending their necks with brass rings? Clearly not, it has continued to the present time. And they are now again exhibiting themselves, as they did on the circus.

The Padaung, a Mongolian tribe, go back to another nationality called "Kang Yan," which existed hundreds of years ago. The King of Kang sent his son to the King of Yunan, China, as a diplomat. When the Prince came back with presents his Princess loved the silver ring most. She never wanted to take it off. Since



Padaung women bathing. Dick Mong collection.

then women of the tribe continue to wear silver or brass rings on their necks, and mostly never removed them.

In the early 1900s, there were as many as 150,000 members of the Padaung tribe in Burma, however, there are now only around 7,500. The Padaung women used to wear as many as 16 to 22 rings on their neck, and up to 30 rings on the calf of their legs. The neck rings were solid and not hollowed and weigh as much as thirty pounds.

The female children start at age of four or five with a single ring, at age eight a second ring is added and a third at age twelve. If everything is

going well two additional rings are added at age fifteen.

Each village has a hostel of unmarried men. It is the tradition that all Padaung unmarried men, and widowers have to live in the hostel.

The men differ from men in other poor villages—they do not work. The gentlemen put in their days swinging in hammocks, smoking small cigars and sipping rice wine.

The June 1979 *National Geographic* magazine contained an article about the long-necked women of Burma. The author, Dr. John M. Keshishman, located X rays of Padaung women in the Rangoon General Hospital. It was clear that the custom of extending the women's necks had continued through the years. Keshishman concluded that the necks had not been stretched at all. Their chests had been pushed down. The addition of each ring increased the pressure downward on the vertebral column.

A New York Times News Service story in June of this year commented on the Padaungs, "The women have worn their coils for generations as a mark of beauty and tribal identity. But even for them and their husbands and brothers, life has been anything but normal."

"They are members of the Kayan tribe of the ethnic Karenni minority in Myanmar, and they all are refugees from the ethics and government repression of their homeland. Some 20,000 other Karenni are crammed into nearby camps along the border living in squalid lives of the disposed. The longnecked women and their families are the exception, housed separately in greater comfort because, as tourist attractions, they can earn money for tribal leaders.

"Among the refugees, they are the privileged earning a monthly stipend as well as the proceeds of the postcards and trinkets they sell to the daily flow of tourists.

"The question is one of dignity. Some people describe the villages as a human zoo."

In addition to neck rings the ladies wear rings on their arms and legs. The leg rings hampered their walking and caused them to waddle. Unable to bend their heads back,



Joan and Dick Mong with Padaung Women. Dick Mong collection.

they drank through straws.

The Padaung people lived in a remote area of Burma north of Rangoon, close to the border with Thailand. Most of the Padaung were poor rice farmers in Burma.

An article in the October 19, 1996 *New York Times* told of the flight of the Padaung people from Myanmar (formerly Burma) to the remote Mae Hong Sorn province of Thailand. Poverty, abuses and fear of the Myanmar military government prompted the move. The people actually began moving across the border as refugees a decade before. They soon became the unofficial symbols of the Mae Hong Sorn province, attracting thousands of foreigners and Thais who come to gawk, photograph and buy their souvenirs.

An Associated Press story, dated April 9, 1998, reported that before a recent police raid, there had been charges the exotic tribes people on show were being held virtual prisoners by a Thai entrepreneur who allegedly abducted them from neighboring Burma.

This was not true. They left Myanmar on their own and found their neck rings were a passport to a much better way of life. Most of the Padaung settled in three border camps in the northwest province of Mae Hong Son.

Dick Mong provided this report on his visit with the Padaung people in Thailand.

"In 2001 the Padaung are living well. My wife and I recently visited them.

"It was a miracle. The giraffe-neck woman had come to life. She was seated before me, shaded by a thatched roof. Through the ears and mouth of a licensed Thailand guide, vigorously engaged in a conversation with my wife Joan. Just as illustrated over sixty years ago while with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, her neck seemed nearly one foot long. She was an attractive girl and apart from the shiny brass coil covering her graceful neck, was quite normal in her appearance.

"Joan and I had departed Seneca, Pennsylvania on February 25, 2001, bound for a three-week trip to Southeast Asia. We were to visit Vietnam, Laos, Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand.

"When circus scout Howard Y. Bary brought five Padaung people to America in 1933 Ringling press agents advertised them as 'The last of the unknown people of the earth.' The three women and two men were divided into two groups, two with Ringling and one with Hagenbeck-Wallace. After a two-year stay they returned to their village in eastern Burma's mountains. Although these Padaung women were few and toured a scant two years, they became the epitome of the circus side show exotic culture attraction.

"Census takers and anthropologists have estimated their number to be around seven thousand. The unique persons are part of the Kayan sub-group of Karen people, which originated in Mongolia. We know that most of those that are alive today are residents of the remote mountainous region of Myanmar, formerly Burma. A few hundred crossed into Thailand as refugees.

"The cost of our private six-hour tour was \$70.00. Our knowledgeable guide was Jam rat Up-Tha, an employee of the S.E.A. Tours Co. From our hotel in Chiang Rai on March 4 we began our trip to see the long necks.

"Our van traveled on a paved highway toward the small town of Mae Chan. While there we went to a general store and purchased some note-

books and pencils to give to the children we would meet. We then drove west on what proved to be a dead end gravel road and walked about a mile to the Padaung village.

"As the civilized world encroached upon remote cultures, such unique customs as body piercing, tattooing, foot-binding and the like are gradually disappearing. The reverse is true in the case of the Padaung. The women have discovered that posing for tourist photos is a far better way of earning a living than laboring in rice fields. Therefore, the practice of 'stretching' ladies necks in the Padaung culture is on the increase in the areas accessible to tourists.

"The necks of these women are not stretched so much as their collar bone is pushed down. This is accomplished by wrapping a coil of 5/16 inch brass wire around the neck of a girl when she is between five and eight years of age. In about two years the coil is removed and replaced with a larger one. The process continues until the girl becomes an adult and takes a husband. The final coil is worn for the rest of her life.

"These ladies have developed a method of bathing their necks. One maiden pours water into the coils while the wearer reciprocates a bundle of long reeds between each ring of the coil, much like we floss our teeth. Other than while bathing, the heavy coil rests on the top of the clean white smock that each girl wears. A soft cotton pad cushions their chin. The women show no discomfort in wearing this heavy brass spring.

"A common story is that if the neck coils were removed, because of atrophy, the neck would not support the woman's head. This does not seem to be the case.

"Why did the Padaung people start this unique custom? The Padaung themselves say their people were created when the great wind copulated with a beautiful lady dragon. The birth of their offspring began the Padaung people. Since that time each woman of the tribe has worn the bright coil of brass on her graceful long neck to honor and appear like the mother dragon. Now that is more than a maybe or a perhaps. It's a Padaung legend that has been passed down through the years.

"The Padaung are fine agriculturalist. They grow rice and vegetables



A Padaung women with her baby. Dick Mong collection.

on terraced slopes high in the southern foothills of the Himalayan Mountains. We observed dried fish and prepared chicken, so obviously that is a part of their diet. The timber is pretty much gone in this area. However, we heard the sound of chopping off in the distance. We assumed it was some of the men cutting firewood or bamboo poles to build a home.

"Joan and I were invited into one of the dozen or so homes that made up the village. It was constructed on a heavy bamboo frame. The sides were covered with slender vertical bamboo poles. The peaked roof was thatched with dried leaves. The floor was dirt. There were no windows, but the interior was well illuminated by the bright sunlight streaming through the narrow openings between each of the sidewall poles. There were two rooms. One was used for cooking, dining and living. The other room contained a wicker bed piled high with fluffy soft comforters. A large double bed size wicker shelf was located in the living room area suggesting additional sleeping space. The home was neat and clean and well constructed. Cooking was done on a simple iron hibachi. There was no electricity or running water. Water for the village

was piped down from a high mountain spring, through an eight-inch bamboo conduit into an open fifty-five gallon steel drum. The water was transported to each home, as needed using rubber pails.

A rather large combination shower room and latrine had a separate water supply. The entire community used this facility. An air of neatness and cleanliness pervaded over the entire village. The citizens appeared to be very healthy and bright.

"Nearly all of the women and young girls wore identical clothing, white smocks, black knee length skirts, both trimmed in red, along with dark blue leggings covering calves were the uniforms of the day. Each wore a head covering consisting of a palfrey of brightly colored silk scarves. Below both knees was a tight five-inch brass spiral ring. A string of heavy silver bracelets adorned both wrists of all of the females. Everyone wore sandals. Individually and as a group they were a gorgeous sight to behold.

"On the other hand, the men and boys wore typical western style clothing except some wore turbans.

"It was evident to us that these spectacular women were the focus of the village. There actions conveyed pride and self-confidence. I think that the little girls can hardly wait until they are grown up and adorned with neck rings.

"We spent two or three hours visiting with various Padaung ladies and school age girls. All were courteous and friendly.

"In this day and age many Padaung have accepted the Catholic faith. In this particular village the people were Buddhists. They were interested in our family and in our appearance. The fact that we had hair on our arms (the Padaung are hairless) was fascinating to them. I outlined the fingers and hand of a little girl on a page of her notebook and signed and dated the drawing. She seemed pleased and I wondered if she would have it as a life long memento of our short visit.

"Another youngster, Ama, gave me a self-portrait that she had drawn, colored and signed. I know that I will have and cherish it for the rest of my life.

"It had been a wonderful day.

Harrington's Nickle Plate Show

A Depression Circus Lasting Three Seasons

By Joseph T. Bradbury

The parade of 1930's depression years short lived small to medium canvas circuses seemingly never end. This one was owned and operated by Ernest A. Harrington. Unlike most of his fellow showmen who fielded out-fits in 1933 during the great depression Harrington framed his show and put it on the road right in the middle of the worst of it.

The economy had eased a little and optimism for better times was present. However, economists later noted the situation hit rock bottom in July 1932 and that fall there was a slight improvement.

Harrington had not spent a lifetime with circuses although he began his fifty years career with a circus and ended it with one. The in between years were filled with many aspects of the amusement business, mostly outdoor under canvas, but some years in theaters.

He was born June 23, 1870. His father was William A. Harrington and his parents were allegedly bare-back riders. Ernest, usually called Ernie, began his career on a wagon show. He later entered the repertoire field with his father.

The March 9, 1929 *Billboard* said it was Harrington's fortieth season in show business, which would make his start in 1889.

In 1899 the E. A. Harrington Vaudeville Circus opened on rails under canvas at Princeton, Indiana. The big top was a 60 with two 30s. On July 12 of that year he married Beatrice Kenny in Vanderburg County, Indiana. (Probably Evansville). In 1900 the show with quarters in Evansville and was converted to an overland wagon operation. The New York *Clipper* reported that fifteen new wagons were built under supervision of William A. Harrington an old

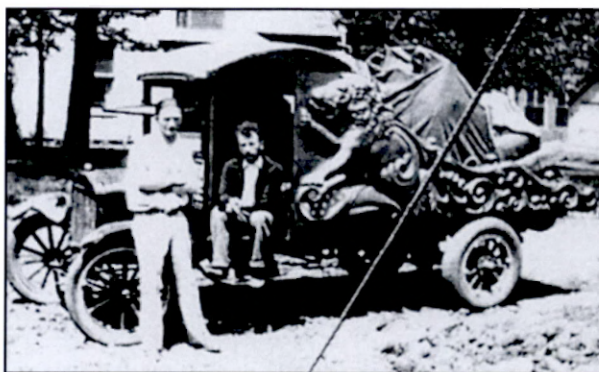


Ernest A. Harrington, Uncle Tom's Cabin and circus owner. Pfening Archives.

time wagon and carriage builder. The *Clipper* listed the title as Harrington's Combined Show. (Sturtevant lists it as E. A. Harrington's Circus.) Harrington's full career from 1900 is fairly well documented but since that is not the main scope of these article only highlights, will be given.

In 1904 there was a Harrington Pavilion Theater, which was probably

Bandwagon used on Harrington's Uncle Tom's Cabin show. Circus World Museum collection.



under tents. In 1910 he advertised for two rail cars to transport an Uncle Tom's Cabin Show (UTC). The *Show World*, reported that Ernest Harrington purchased three rail cars at the Norris & Rowe Circus auction in the Hagenbeck-Wallace quarters in Peru, Indiana in of June 1910. In June the *Clipper* published an ad for Harrington's UTC show at Princeton, Indiana. In the years 1910-1920 the trade publications had stories and advertisements of the Harrington UTC. In 1911 the Harrington Stock Company was in its tenth season under canvas. In 1912 it was reported Harrington's Pavilion Theater was on two cars and the October 17, 1914 *Clipper* said Harrington owner of the Beatrice Harrington Stock Company.

In the 1920s Harrington had dramatic and musical shows playing under canvas and his obit claimed he operated the first motorized tent show making nightly stands with *Peck's Bad Boy*. The July 14, 1923 *Billboard* noted Harrington toured a motorized repertoire show. Also in the 20s he operated a goodly sized UTC show, which featured a parade. In September 1929 Harrington offered for sale his Tom show with this advertisement in *Bill Wuno's Bulletin*: "For Sale. Harrington's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The finest and best equipped Tom Show in the world. Three block parade, 53 whistle calliope, 7 trucks, house car, 50 x 130 top in good shape and two light plants. This is the best buy in show business. Must be seen to be appreciated. Will deliver at end of season. Am retiring from the show business. Write E. A. Harrington at permanent address, 115 West 5th St., Kansas City, Mo."

Harrington's 1929 UTC

had an air calliope on a Model T truck with carvings on the sides. These carvings are now at the Circus World Museum. A factor in Harrington's plan to sell his show was his health. In 1929. He was on the verge of double pneumonia.

The *Billboard* reported in March 1929 Harrington was again sick, which delayed the show opening a week.

In March 1930 *Bill Brunols Bulletin* reported that Harrington had sold his UTC to Messers Isley and Goebel of Oklahoma City and that the Harringtons were retiring from show business. The report stated the Oklahoma showmen would use the outfit for a presentation of *The Covered Wagon* motion picture with William Desmond, the movie star, featured in personal appearances.

Herald used by Harrington in 1932. Circus World Museum collection.

Harrington didn't retire as advertised. In June 1930 he opened in a fine tent by Baker-Lockwood in Loath, Kansas with a production of *Abie's Irish Rose*. It didn't draw in Olathe and other Kansas towns, and closed after four weeks. Equity, the actor's union filed suit against Harrington claiming two weeks back pay for five cast members, but two others did not file.

He claimed the actors themselves broke the contract by demanding two weeks notice when only one was required.

In the meantime, after the Abie fiasco Harrington hurried to Kansas City, Missouri where he framed a UTC and quickly opened it in established territory. There is no information on how long this show lasted. The December 12, 1931 *Billboard* said that Doc Barrett of Lincoln, Nebraska had purchased all of Harrington's UTC equipment which

had been stored at College View, Nebraska. Barrett was currently using the show's ponies and air calliope in Santa Claus parades in Nebraska and in the spring of 1932 would launch his own version of Uncle Tom.

With his hands filled with all kinds of ventures in various forms of show business Harrington somehow found time to get into the air calliope manufacturing business. He made 43 and 53 whistle pressure air calliopes in both Los Angeles and Kansas City, Missouri from the early 20s until about 1927. The remnants of his firm, the Harrington New Tone Calliope Company eventually evolved into the National Calliope Company. Fred Dahlinger advises that very few of his instruments are known to exist today.

1932

Harrington's move into the circus field after so long with other amusements is somewhat unique, but a couple of others did likewise in the depression years.

In 1935 Phil Isley who was one of the two men who bought Harrington's UTC in 1910, fielded a medium motorized canvas circus titled Bailey Bros.

Harrington organized his new circus in Oklahoma City and did it rather quietly. Nothing appeared about it in the trade publication until this adver-



La Mont elephant Fredia being unloaded. Bob MacDougall collection.

tisement in the March 26, 1932 *Billboard*, "Wanted for Harrington's Nickle Plate Show. Circus people in all lines. Trained animal acts, musicians. Can place two menage horses, must be first class. State lowest first letter. Show opens last week in April. Address: E. A. Harrington, 205 South Broadway, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma."

A short note in the April 30 issue stated that O. A. Gilson former bandmaster on Robbins Bros. had signed to place a band with Harrington. Nickle Plate Show, motorized outfit.

In the May 7 *Billboard* Circus Solly wrote in Under the Marquee. "Solly understands that Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus, managed E. A. Harrington is the old La Mont Bros. outfit. It has 20 trucks with trailers, 14 cages of animals, 3 elephants; 2 camels, big, top an 80 with three 30s (other reports say a 90 with three middles. Was scheduled to open in Oklahoma City April 29. Will play two and three day stands under auspices

The early route unknown however the Marcks notes list the show at Tulsa, May 5, and Vinita, May 6, both Oklahoma.

Fredia pushing a small cage. Bob MacDougall collection.



The May 21 *Billboard* noted that Harrington's Nickle Plate played Tulsa with two big houses. Business had been very good since opening at Oklahoma City April 29. A chain of grocery stores has given free tickets with dollars worth of goods. This was a version of the merchant's ticket plan, which many have claimed was a life savior for the small and medium motorized shows in the depression.

The *Billboard* did not publish its usual opening review of the show but it appears Charles LaMont (real name Randolph) who had toured LaMont Bros. motorized circus on the road through the 1930 season may have greatly influenced Harrington to get into the circus business. LaMont's elephant, "Freida," plus no doubt her transport vehicle was with the new show as well other LaMont properties.

Also in the May 21 *Billboard* Frank (Doc) Stewart in his column. Sawdust, had this fine report on the show, "Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 14, 'Hold Your Horses, The Elephants are Coming. And they came. All three of them and Ernest Harrington and his Harrington Nickle Plate Show opened its initial circus performance April 30 (actually 29th) and much praise, tootin' of horns, shucking of peanuts, and other enjoyments. Much has been said about other motorized circuses but Harrington's resplendent in new canvas, brightly painted truck trailers, and house cars, hospitality and steaming coffee is nothing to be sneezed at in spite of bad weather.

Depression in circus parlance this Harrington chap was a new gigolo to the business, but he had. ideas, a bankroll, determination, intestinal fortitude, plus years of Uncle Toms' Cabin experience."

"It is said that a theatrical gentleman is a complete blowdown when it comes to operating a circus, but Harrington has ideas that seem to attract loose nickles, dimes, quarters, and half dollars in the direction of



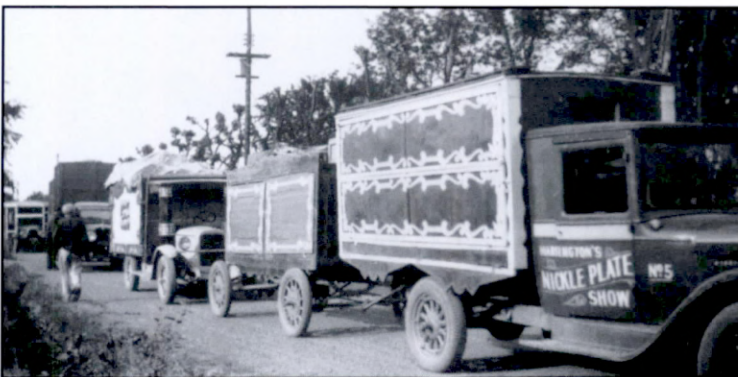
Harrington seat semi in 1932. Bob MacDougall collection.

his ticket wagon and he is satisfied. That should tickle the other truck circus operators. Did you ever cast optics on Mister Ernest Harrington? Well, he resembles the late Andrew Downie McPhee more than the late Mr. Downie resembled himself. He not only looks like him, but talks, acts, and thinks like the late operator of a motorized circus.

"Being new in the circus business, it was fitting that Harrington's

Circus should be new throughout. It has a beautiful new big top (a 90 with three 30s, a menagerie that is an equal contender with many a large railroad show and various other spreads of canvas necessary to properly house the show and impress the gaping natives. What does the motor circus manager think of this—the menagerie? boasts of three elephants, a zebra, a zebu, a camel, a reindeer, two ostriches, and 19, count brother, cages of animals. Each animal seems to be built for the cage, not the cage built for the animal. Everything new and painted equally as well as any railroad show. The lettering sign work is mighty fine.

Harrington trucks on the road in 1932. Bob MacDougall collection.



"The only objection to Harrington's performance is too many acts. Rigging hangs all over the big top. Five trapeze acts going on at the same moment. Three rings with a trick 'bull' working in each ring. Another ring Harrington has too much of everything. He boasts of three

equestrian directors and each director was a former circus owner. Get 'em now, Freddie Hatfield, known to the old-timers as Fred Campbell of Campbell Bros. Great. Consolidated Shows, Freddie was one of the 'brothers', only Freddie was a cousin. Then comes Charlie LaMont, of the late LaMont Bros. Circus, and Bill Kelly, late owner of Singer Bros. Circus. The band boasts of nine pieces and three horn tooters were formerly of Sells-Floto. Backing the band is a calliope, which means more tooting. In the big show one will find acts from Sells-Floto, Barnes, Sparks. Harrington also has one of those George Washington spectacles, which seem to be popular. (It was the 200th anniversary of George's birth.)

"Harrington is playing the Chamber of Commerce, merchant and ticket sales guarantees. The show is booked well in advance. Large audiences and warm praise from the guarantors of the scheme express that he is giving satisfaction. They even hasten to pay their guarantee and when that happens in this hard-boiled oil city of more than 20,000 folk it would indicate that other motor circuses should keep an eye on Harrington. He's got it"

The show was in Kansas the next time it was mentioned in the trade press. The June 4 *Billboard* stated.

"Bonner Springs, Kansas, May 28 —The Harrington Nickle Plate Shows played this city last Saturday (21) to fair business. Manager E. A. Harrington reports that business to date has been far beyond expectations. In at least six stands the show had turn-away business including



Laurence, Kansas, usually considered a 'blank' by circuses and carnivals.

"Show travels on 25 trucks and trailers. The greater part of this equipment is new. The new top is 90 with three 30s. Side show top is a 70 with one 30.

"The staff: E. A. Harrington, owner and manager, with Mrs. Harrington and daughter, Millie, occupying the other office positions; Charles La Mont, assistant manager; Omer Eddings, in charge of animals; Harold A. Chistry, manager of Zoo Side Show; Joe Lloyd, boss canvas man; Henry Stevens, steward; Frank McAllen, chief mechanic; Henry Barnett, electrician; Harry Hammond, boss of props; O. A. Gilson, bandmaster; Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Murray, in front of Zoo Side Show.

"The acts: Atterbury family, wire and double trapeze; Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hatfield, ponies and aerial; Three Underhills, wire walking, traps, and Australian whip crackers. Mr. and Mrs. Happy Loder, musical in concert; De Rossitt Sisters, aerial; the Zerados, aerial; Bert De Arrow and Lloyd Center, aerial contortionists. Sam West is producing clown with six assistants.

"Side show comprises of 21 cages of animals, including two lion cages, two cats, two hyenas, monks, ostriches, zebra, and deer.

"Show opens with a Washington Bicentennial spec. This is also used in the street parade."

The circus played Macon, Missouri, June 1. Moving eastward the show played Princeton Indiana, June 21.

Karl K. Knecht, editor of the *White Tops*, visited Fred Hatfield, once in Indiana and his report was the July 1932 issue, "Your editor

The Harrington four center pole big top. Circus World Museum collection.

caught Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus at Princeton, Indiana, June 21, and a nifty good outfit it is. Ernest Harrington, an old trouper, was born in Princeton, Indiana June 24, 1870. Started with the Harrington Stock Company in 1888. Carlton Guy's mother was with him. He then had a Tom show, manufactured air calliopes; and such. Organized this circus in Oklahoma. Has three ex-circus owners with him. Fred Hatfield, once of the old the July 1932 issue, "Your editor

A Harrington litho printed by Donaldson. Circus World Museum collection.



Campbell Bros, Charles La Mont, once of La Mont Bros, and R. L. Atterbury of the circus of that name and others. Each works in program. Bob Norton is equestrian director. Acts which would do justice in any big one are in the program. The menagerie is a wonder. It is a Christy unit in charge of Harold Christy and A. B. Murray. Has three elephants, Freida off La Monts and Dixie and Myrtle off

Christy's, zebra, camel, aoudad, several deer, elk, ostrich, emu, four lions, hyena and baby, leopards, monkeys of all kinds, bear, birds, 17 cages and four pens. Admission to big show was 25 cents, everybody works merchants tickets too. Has 21 trucks and trailers plus house cars. Jack Bell has the band.

"Featured in program are Frank and Vera Zearcid, double traps, Hatfields and La Mont work ponies, mules, monks, etc. H. Drako has trained sheep, his wife some wonder Pomeranians. The Atterbury children do several numbers, wire, traps etc. and are fine. Clowns are Barclay, Wear, Center, and Simmons. DeRout, contortionist and others. The concert was five cents."

The report said Jack Bell was now the Harrington bandleader would mean that O.L. Gilson had departed. No notice of this had been in the trade publication. Gilson was a first class bandleader and had headed Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. band through the 1930 season but was unable to tour the final 1931 season on account of illness.

Photos of the about 20 trucks and trailers reported there were several semis transporting the elephants and seats. Two different four-wheel cage trailers with solid rubber tires are pictured. Of the three elephants, Freida, Dixie, and Myrtle, the latter two leased from G. W. Christy are shown. Sadly missing are photos of the several other animals leased from Christy and kept in a separate menagerie tent managed by Harold Christy. There are counts of 17 to 19 cages of Christy animals plus four pens, which would house larger beasts, ostrich, reindeer, supposedly present. No way can it be believed

there were 19 separate cage vehicles. Many scribes or reviewers would count each animal compartment as a separate cage. It would appear that the cages were more like shifting dens.

The show did parade but there are no photos showing a band in it or a vehicle used by it on the lot.

Following the Princeton, Indiana stand the show was in Illinois at Olney, on June 23 followed by Flora 24, Mount Vernon .25, and Hillsboro, 27.

The July 16 *Billboard* reported, "Dakota City, Nebraska, July 9—The Atterbury Troupe, aerialists and tight wire performers closed a successful ten week engagement with Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus at Hillsboro, Illinois, June 27, and returned to quarters. They will soon start on fair and celebration contracts."

In the same issue this ad appeared. "Wanted. circus bandleader, other musicians write. State salary. Must be low. Columbus, Tuesday; Eidon, Saturday; Marshall, Monday. All Missouri. Harrington's Nickle Plate Show."

The bandleader position was like a revolving door. Evidently Jack Bell who was bandleader at Princeton, Indiana, on June 21 must have departed as well as other musicians.

Harrington was still looking for a bandleader when he ran this ad in the August 30 *Billboard*. "Wanted for Harrington's Nickle Plate Show. Bandleader, trap drummer, other musicians write. Can also place two teams doing two or more acts. State all first letter. Salary in keeping with the times. People who have written before write again. Address E. A. Harrington, Wellington, Kansas."

The route then becomes lost until it played Bartlesville, Oklahoma, September 2. Other known dates in the Sooner state were Ardmore, 22 and Madill, 26.

The October 1 *Billboard* carried this advertisement, "Wanted Quick. Two A-1 circus acts, all musicians. Must join immediately Write lowest salary. Harrington's Nickle Plate Show, Madill, Oklahoma. Want information leading to whereabouts of Bruce M. Meeker."

Moving southward into Texas the show would spend the rest of its initial season in that state.

Another ad appeared the October 8 *Billboard*, "Wanted for Harrington's Nickle Plate Show. Acts and musicians. Winter work to the right people. Must join on wire. State all. Jacksonville, Thursday (October 6), Palestine, Friday (7). Both Texas."

The final date we have for Harrington is November 7 at Wharton, Texas. Upon close of the 1932 season Harrington's show moved into winter quarters in San Antonio.

19 33

Although 1932 had seen the worst of the depression most circuses had survived but that was about all. Only one of the four railroad shows would fail to go out in 1933. Sells-Floto which had moved on 30 cars would be shelved but Hagenbeck-Wallace would add five making it a 40-car show in 1933.

Ringling-Barnum remained on 90 cars but John Ringling had lost Control. Samuel P. Gumpertz hired by Ringling's creditors would be charge of the Big One as well as Hagenbeck-Wallace and Al G. Barnes again traveling on 30 cars. Barnes had closed in late August 1932 and upon arrival in Baldwin Park, California found the property owner had put it off the quarters land. The show then found a new place a quarter-mile down the road. A movie contract to provide animals, personnel, and properties for a new movie, *King of the Jungle*, greatly helped the situation.

The first news from Harrington came in the January 14, 1933 *Billboard*, "San Antonio, January 19—Preparations are being made at the quarters of the Harrington

The big top and pole semi in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.

Nickle Plate Circus for the coming circus season. Manager E. A. Harrington has been buying ponies, dogs, monkeys, two horses for menage and a posing turn. He has a fine bunch of leaping greyhounds.

"Four six-wheel truck units are now under construction and at least two more will be built to carry added equipment and stock. A big new spec is being arranged and all new wardrobe is being made. There will be special lighting effects. Some new canvas is being purchased.

"Mr. Harrington states that he has already signed some good feature acts. The folks enjoyed Christmas at quarters and everyone was remembered with a present.

The February 18 *Billboard* noted, "San Antonio, February 11, Harrington's Nickle Plate Show has purchased more ponies which will be trained, also a menage horse which will be a feature in center ring. Charlie Aldridge is now busy framing a pony act. A recent guest at quarters was J. F. Rodabaugh of the Baker-Lockwood Company.

A report in the March 11 *Billboard* dated San Antonio, March 4, said, "J. A. McArthur, a mechanic, has filed suit seeking to attach the Harrington Nickle Plate Show in quarters here and asking a judgment and its subsequent sale, if necessary, in efforts to collect \$514.95 back wages which is due him. Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Harrington are named defendants. McArthur alleged he went to work for them in April 1932 and that the sum named was still due him when he left in December 1932.

Two weeks later the *Billboard* in an item dated Houston, March 18, noted that Harrington told about the recent attachments of properties in winter quarters. He advised that satisfactory adjustments have been



made. Opening date is set for early April.

In a report also from Houston dated April 1, the April 8 *Billboard* said that C.M. Bowman, last season general agent for Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus, despite rumors to the contrary, would pilot the show, according to the contract shown the *Billboard*. Bowman who is part owner of the Capitol Hotel here, informs he will leave for the circus quarters about April 4.

The circus would open April 20 in or near San Antonio. Bowman will carry four men on the advance.

News from Harrington's show was coming nearly every week in the trade publication. The April 15 *Billboard* noted, "San Antonio, April 6—Harrington's Nickle Plate Show, motorized, wintering in San Antonio, will open here the latter part of April. It will be one of the prettiest truck shows on the road. New six wheel units have been added. The big bull truck, just built, has capacity to haul 7,000-pound elephant. Pony drills, dogs, monkeys, cat acts and menage horses, which have been trained here, are ready to hit the road. All trucks have been placed in perfect mechanical condition, as well as having been repainted.

"Six cages have been built for the zoo and are now the homes of some fine specimens of animals. Several new styles of pictorial paper have been ordered. Management has arranged an Oriental spec opening and wardrobe will be new. The advance staff, C. M. Bowman, George Duvall, Jack Turner, Al Lindley and Walter Williams has reported."

In the same issue was this advertisement was published, "Wanted for Harrington's Nickle Plate Show. Circus Acts. A-1 bandleader. State salary, which must be low. Side show to be let to responsible party. Can place, Wild West concert on percentage. E. A. Harrington, 234 W. Reunther, San Antonio, Texas."

The same ad was repeated in the following issue. Harrington must have gotten an A-1 bandleader as the next report said that O.A.



Another large Harrington semi in 1933. Circus World Museum collection.

Gilson had the job.

The opening date was changed to April 28 as per the account in the April 29 *Billboard*, "San Antonio, April 22—Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus will open here April 28 for a two day engagement under auspices of the Hammond Stores.

"Program will open with a spec, A Night in Arabia. Many animal acts will be in the show. Millie Harrington will be seen in a menage number.

"The side show will consist of a unit from the Christy show, with Harold Christy in charge. Band of eight will be in charge of O.A. Gilson.

"The Staff: E.A. Harrington, general manager; Millie Harrington, secretary; Beatrice Harrington, treasurer; C. M. Bowman, general agent; George Duvall and Jack Turner, promoters; Al Lindley in charge of billing with three assistants; Charles Aldrich, superintendent of privileges; Harry Sells, boss canvasman; Dan Frost, master mechanic; Omar, charge of the cookhouse; Jim Pennington, side show; H. H. Williams, reserved seat tickets.

"Five stands will be played in Texas, then into Oklahoma."

Although there is a photo dated 1933 which someone wrote on it,

Wild west riders in the backyard. Circus World Museum collection.



"delivering two Christy elephants to Harrington" but only one can be clearly seen. In all probability the show leased only one from Christy, Daisy, as the Woodcock files so state. The LaMont elephant, Freida, which was on Harrington's show in 1932 was now on the Freckles Gang Comedy Circus.

Again, there was no detailed opening review in *Billboard*, but the show was represented in the 1933 edition of *Circus Magazine* which served a number of motorized circuses and carnivals. Some would list complete programs but Harrington did not.

He utilized his two pages by placing on page one the title of Harrington's Nickle Plate Show, Three Ring Circus Beautiful and a portrait of himself. Text read, "Harrington's Nickle Plate Show, the famous three-ring circus beautiful is again appearing and meeting its many friends in its old territory which is traveled year after year with increased popularity at every visit. The reason for this is that the owners always bring a real circus to town, and they are real folks, all performers and musicians having been with the organization for at least one year. This is a tribute to the management. E. A. Harrington is a wonderful manager, capable, energetic, and sympathetic. He is always the first to render aid if one of his workers is sick or is injured. He is blessed with an understanding hard to find in circus managers and is always kind and sympathetic to anyone in need. He is always alert to business and has the reputation of being one of the keenest men in the circus world.

His success is attested by the condition of his equipment, which is always in first class order. His vast spread of tents is always new and of the best, and his animals receive the very best of care in every respect not only when on the road but during the winters as well. He has this season some of the most beautiful stock ever assembled for a circus, including two thoroughbred blue-ribbon winners among his horses, which

he values at \$5,000 and which certainly look the money.

"Always a ready helper and a valuable partner, Mrs. Beatrice Harrington constantly consulted on any question concerning the show and with a team such as Mr. and Mrs. Harrington the success of this show is well assured. Everybody in the circus loves Mrs. Harrington, and the harmony that prevails on the lot of the Harrington Nickle Plate Show is attributable to nothing so much as to the tact of this lovable woman.

"Mr. Harrington's pet hobby is his little granddaughter Patsy Bee. She is now two years old and rides her own pony in the concert. She has a real Wild West outfit and makes 'Buck Shot' step when he enters the ring. She also drives a tandem of four goats in the Grand Entry; and is the youngest performer in the circus world today.

"To add to her accomplishments she is training for a contortion act as well as a bareback riding act which she will be doing before the summer is half over. Mr. Harrington's daughter Millie is still his standby, being a very capable assistant in any capacity. It is mighty hard to beat the Harrington Nickle Plate Show; it is clean in every respect and is always welcomed back in every city in which it has played. It is on this that Mr. Harrington has built his reputation"

On the other page with the show's title at the top are photos of little Patsy Bee and her first pony, "Big Joel," America's Greatest Boxing Kangaroo, a camel and rider, a shot

Harrington newspaper as used in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.

BIG 3 RING
CIRCUS
COMING TO MONTICELLO
FRIDAY, MAY 25
Harrington's Nickle Plate
and
PAWNEE BILLS BUFFALO RANCH
COMBINED

AERIAL ARTISTS—WIRE WALKERS—A LOAD OF
FUNNY CLOWNS—TRAINED ANIMALS
16 FULL BLOODED INDIANS 16—INDIAN VILLAGE
COWBOYS—COWGIRLS—TRICK RIDING—FANCY ROPIN
BUCKING HORSES—BUFFALOES

90 PEOPLE 90

BIG FREE STREET PARADE AT NOON
Special Admission Price This Date Only
25c TO ALL 25c
Circus Grounds—East Monticello Athletic Field

**HARRINGTON'S
NICKLE PLATE
SHOW**

AND

PAWNEE BILL'S BUFFALO RANCH

COMBINED

**3 RING CIRCUS
BEAUTIFUL**

New Novelties in Performing Wild Animals
Historical Spectacle



THE KIDS STILL CARRY WATER TO
THE NICKLE PLATE SHOW ELEPHANTS

of a large male lion in cage, and a group of lion cubs.

The 1933 season opened with a two day stand in San Antonio on April 28-29. It next moved to New Braunfels for an April 30 date to be followed by four more stands in Texas, Austin, Waco, Arlington, and Bowie. Following a Sunday off the Nickle Plate moved northward into Oklahoma May 5 at Waunika. Next came Shawnee, Holdenville, and two days in Tulsa, May 10-11, Claremore and Miami on May 13, which was the final date in the state.

There was little *Billboard* coverage after the opening. A short bit in the May 6 issue said that the Frazier brothers, acrobats, were on the show doing hand to hand and balancing, also perch act.

After an off Sunday, May 14, the show went into Kansas for performance at Columbus (15), then jumped into Missouri at Joplin (16) which was the home of Arthur Toeves, noted circus fan photographer whose work has been invaluable to historians. Toeves took most of the photos with this article

A return to Kansas came the following day at Pittsburg then Chanute, Garnett, Baldwin, Toga-noxie, Olathe, and Paola, home of the former James Patterson circuses and carnivals. On May 25 the show again returned to Missouri at Birchmore but immediately went back to Kansas for two days in Ft. Scott, May 26-27, which was the last known stand in the Jayhawk state 1933.

The final three days in May found the show in Missouri at Nevada, Clinton, and Windsor. Still in that state California was on tap June 1 with the next known date at Louisiana, June 5, after which began seven engagements in Illinois.

This advertisement was in the June 3 *Billboard*, "Wanted for

Letterhead used by Harrington in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.

Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus. Agent. Must have car. Side Show people, also man to do Punch, Magic. A No. 1 aerial team doing two or more acts. All state lowest. Must join on wire. Address F. A. Harrington, Washington, Missouri."

Virtually nothing was printed about show for several weeks, however this shortie came in the June 10 issue, "Four circuses were recently in the Kansas, City region; Wager Bros. at Fairyland Park, Freckles Gang Circus at Winnwood Park, Harrington's Nickle Plate and Jon Willander Show were close to Kansas City."

Starting June 6 a tour of Illinois began lasting until June 13. The circus moved to Indiana on June 14 at Brazil for 14 stands. Princeton, Indiana was played on July 5. Harrington laid over in Princeton, supposedly to reorganize, which may have been due to lack of route for a few days. It reopened in Mt. Carmel, Illinois on July 10.

From then on a silence descended on the trade publication concerning the Harrington show. No route was published, no stories, even Circus Soily had any quips, all a sure sign things were not well. Only one other stand until the show closed is known, that being in Mexico, Missouri on August 25.

The long silence ended in the September 2 *Billboard* reported Harold Christy of Christy Bros. had joined the Bill Hames Shows (carnival) with a menagerie unit of twelve cages of small animals and several head of lead stock. The unit had been with the Harrington Nickle Plate Show. The date the unit actually left Harrington was not given.

The October 7 *Billboard* noted Arthur Langford who had been

clowning with Harrington returned to his home in Gainesville, Texas where he joined the Gainesville Community Circus for its fair engagement at Bonham, Texas.

A week later *Billboard* announced that Harrington's Nickle Plate Show had recently closed the season at Norman, Oklahoma, September 2 and the equipment was put in storage at Oklahoma City.

The October 28 *Billboard* carried this advertisement, "Circus For Sale.

Harrington's Nickle Plate Show. Three ring motorized circus. All equipment and stock is of the finest, all in first class condition. Best buy ever offered. Ill health demands immediate sale. Address, Harrington's Nickle Plate Show, 1206 Agnew St., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma."

Nothing further was heard from the show for the remainder of 1933. Another year of the great depression was history. Circus business had improved somewhat but the depression's end was still years away. An interesting bit of history is that Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adolph Hitler of Germany both became heads of state in 1933. In eight short years both would still be in office and their countries would be at war with each other. They would both die in 1945 still in office and within only a few weeks of each other.

1934

Harrington had no takers and the circus was not sold. A short teaser appeared in the January 6, 1934 *Billboard*, telling of a prominent individual tying up with a motorized circus. It wouldn't be officially announced until mid-March but when it did it gave a positive boost to the Harrington show.

The details appeared in the January 27 *Billboard* headlined a piece, "Harrington adding three trucks. San Antonio, Texas, January 20—Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Harrington of Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus, accompanied by their daughter Mitilda, and little granddaughter, Patsy Bee, who have been spending a few weeks at Corpus Christy will soon return to the show's quarters at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and work of preparing the show for an early spring opening will soon be in full swing. Mr. Harrington spent a few

days with his assistant manager, Charlie Aldridge, who is in this city for a few weeks.

"Mr. Harrington advises that both the show and its transportation fleet will be augmented, including several odd specimens of animals recently; purchased. There will be a new opening spectacle for which wardrobe is being made, also special electrical effects and three new motor trucks with 20-foot trailers will be added to the overland fleet. Another elephant probably will be added.

"A great deal of work has been under way at winter quarters."

The March 7 *Billboard* reported in a story dated Oklahoma City, February 27, "Harrington's Nickle Plate Show winter quarters announce that activities are now moving speedily getting ready for the opening. Harry Sells has completed six lengths of seats, which will make 43 lengths this year and is starting work on new ring curbs, putting in full time daily and keeping his crew busy. Painting will begin next week. Everything will come out of quarters looking like new. The wardrobe is almost completed for the new spectacle.

"The stock is working out daily and is almost ready for the road. The band is to have all new uniforms. Manager Harrington judging from the acts already signed, I am going to have a real program.

"Quite a number of the people who have been with the show the last two seasons will be back this year."

Mr. Harrington said he had a very pleasant visit with Pawnee Bill. They spent the day recalling old times and the day passed all too fast.

The March 17 *Billboard* proclaimed the big news, answering the reason for Harrington's recent visit to Pawnee Bill (Major Gordon W. Lillie) as well.

The article was headlined "Pawnee

Bill closes deal. Will have an old west with Harrington's Nickle Plate. Cincinnati, March 10—the *Billboard* was informed that Major Gordon W. Lillie has closed a deal with Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus to furnish an Old West attraction in conjunction with that show this year.

Herald used by Harrington in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.

"The western offering to be billed as Pawnee Bill Buffalo Ranch with Bill Penny in direct charge. Mr. Penny has been exclusively active for Major Lillie at cowboy and Indian sports shows occasionally staged at Pawnee Bill's Old Town near Pawnee, Oklahoma the last few years. Mr. Penny advises that the road unit will carry about 30 head of stock and a coterie of cowboys and Indians. The show is scheduled to open at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma April 15. (That

date was later changed to April 21.)

A week later the *Billboard* advised that Harrington had recently returned to his winter quarters in Oklahoma City from a trip to Pawnee, Oklahoma and preparation for an early opening of Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus and Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch are being pushed.

"The April 7 *Billboard* had this advertisement, Wanted for Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus and Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch Combined. Two teams doing real circus acts to strengthen program. Wardrobe and ability essential. State lowest and full particulars with photo. Address E. A. Harrington, 206 S. Ignew. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

A portrait of Pawnee Bill was published the next week with this cut line.

"Major G. R. Lillie (Pawnee Bill)

who has combined a Buffalo Ranch with Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus."

An example of the newly designed letterhead for the Harrington's Nickle Plate Show and Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch is in the Circus World Museum files. Dated April 12, 1934 and addressed to Walter Van Dyke,

Ponca City Oklahoma, and signed by E. A. Harrington, reads, "As my bandleader A. Lee Hinckley just reported and he says he can place you, salary ten dollars a week, board, and transportation. If this satisfactory wire on receipt and report by April 16th, show opens here April 21."

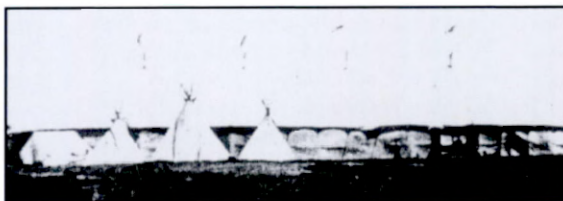
Bandleader A. Lee Hinkney is well known to many current circus fans and historians, as he was active through the 1950s and in particular fronted the band on the large motorized King Bros. Circus in the early and mid 50s.

Musician Van Dyke's diary was made available to the late Ted Bowman and subsequently to John Polacsek and as a result we have a complete run of the stands played for the first month when Van Dyke was on the show.

The show's herald by Erie was revised to include the new title and additional photos of Harrington and Pawnee Bill. Admission prices were 25 cents to all and a free street parade would be given at noon.

The circus opened as scheduled on April 21 in Oklahoma City, but strangely there was no account of it in *Billboard*. We must assume the Pawnee Bill additions under direction of Fill Penny performed as outlined in the show herald. Possibly Pawnee Bill put in an appearance on opening day but we have no evidence he was on the show at any time. We must also assume that in all probability Pawnee Bill provided the transportation for his personnel and stock. Photos picture a number of teepees on tile lot.

The February-March-April 1934 *White Tops* mentioned the Harrington opening but had no details. It did say a parade was presented carrying 36 horses, 8 ponies, a herd of buffalo, 20 Indians, 10 cowboys, 5 cowgirls, and two bands. An interesting photo pictures a flat bed semi in parade carrying two portable lion cages.



Indian teepees in front of the big top in 1934. Circus World Museum collection.

Later in the season after the show was sold and became Duggan Bros. Circus, Arthur Toeves photographed the show in Parson, Kansas and one shot shows several portable cages being off loaded from a straight bed truck. An elephant survey made by *White Tops* in 1934 listed Harrington's Nickle Plate Show having only one. Its identity is not known but good possibility it was the Christy owned Daisy.

This interesting advertisement appeared in the April 28 *Billboard*, "Wanted, musicians for Tol Bros. Circus, all instruments, good long season. Clarinet doubling alto sax, strong circus baritone. George Gardner answer. Show opens April 26. A. Lee Hinckley, 215 West Reno Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma."

This suggests that bandleader Hinckley had a short stay with Harrington. Writhe he even opened with Harrington.

The trade publication had not even a route for the next several weeks. Fortunately bandsman Van Dyke's diary informs us of the route for the month he was with it. All dates will be given to record the route for the first month of the 1934 season. The deal with Pawnee Bill must have been on some sort of a percentage arrangement; otherwise it would be virtually impossible for Harrington to handle this kind of expense.

After the opening there was a Sunday off (April 22). Then came a number of Oklahoma stands. By May 10 the circus was in Clairton, Iowa. Van Dyke left the show on May 19 in Clinton, Missouri.

Two dates in Illinois are known, Fairbury (23) and Wateseka (24), Indiana stands at Monticello (25), Logansport, June 4, Decatur (7), and Portland (8), Pawhuska (27) and going into Kansas Coffeyville (28-29), Baxter Springs (30). On June 1 the show was in Missouri then Rich Hill

(2), Pleasant Hill (3), Lexington (4), Richmond off (6), Hamilton (7), Chillicothe (8), Princeton (9).

The long *Billboard* silence regarding Harrington matters ended in the June 16 issue. "Decatur, June 9--Harrington's

Nickle Plate Circus and Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch played this city on Tuesday to two full houses. The matinee was mostly for the children. This was the third circus to appear here this spring. Bernard Bros. being here several weeks previous.

"Mr. Harrington stated that because of a tornado in Logansport Monday he was unable to present his menagerie here, the storm destroying much of the tent and supplies.

"When the show appeared at Lafayette a day last week two matinees and two evening shows were necessary because of the overflow crowds. The concert featured Chief Yellow Eye and family who staged an Indian wedding now and then. The Indians will not do it often according to Mr. Harrington.

"Arthur Powell and Billy Dick have a nice little side show with new top, they also have a pit show.

"Harrington's big top, purchased last year, presents an excellent appearance. It is an 80 foot round top with three 30 foot middle pieces, three rings and 30 lengths of seats. The show went on to Portland from here.

The same *Billboard* carried this advertisement, which in time would play an important role in the future of Harrington's show. "Will Buy Circus. Indent medium size motorized show in good condition. Must be priced right for cash. Give full description. State facts in first letter. Manager wanted. Can use high type man capable, organizing and managing show. State facts. Give references. Will be north in two weeks, F. Duggan, Hazlehurst, Ga."

In the mean time it had been rumored around the circus world that John Robinson III oldest son if John IV was interested in putting out a circus so evidently that was the reason for Harrington's trip to the Robinson's on June 6 and John Robinson IV visit to the show at Decatur, Indiana on June 7. The two men must have been in contact earlier as the telegram gives a description of the circus properties for sale. It

read, "Big top eighty with three thirties, complete thirty lengths circus seats, nine trucks five of them six wheelers, light plant on trailer, wiring complete. All props. Two ménage horses three years old. Two riding horses. Two riding monkeys. Two goat acts. Four pony drill. Leaping hounds. Wallace act side show fighting lion, Bucking mule. Four cages. Outfit complete in A-one condition. Best buy ever offered. Decatur Thursday, Portland, Friday. This is Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus. Desire answer via Western Union. E. K. Harrington."

The final date of the 1934 season was at Greenfield, Indiana in mid June. The show parked on the local fairgrounds unable to move on. It seems the money had just ran out according to the local newspaper.

The June 19, 1934 *Greenfield Daily Reporter* noted, "Lions roaring at fair grounds, now a Circus."

"Not long ago it was a whale stranded here. Now Harrington's Nickle Plate Circus is still with us. The estimable little show, which played a one-day stand in Greenfield last Wednesday, failed to move out to the next town after the performances here, and have been camped under the shade of the trees in the fair ground. Complications of the exchequer are the diagnosis of the trouble of the rolling show. However, the commissary department is reported as still holding out and according to the happy philosophy of the circus as long as we eat we live.

"However, residents of the vicinity are complaining about lions belonging to the show's menagerie. This may work out as another example of Greenfield's luck. Two years ago the city was presented with a stuffed whale on a siding of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was around several weeks. Now it may be required to adopt some lions." Although some showmen knew of the plight of the show and that it was for sale the entire circus world knew it after this advertisement appeared in the June 23 *Billboard*, "For Sale. Nickle Plate Circus. Three ring circus complete, 8 animal acts, 9 trucks, five 6 wheelers, and equipment of the best and in A-1 condition. Big top 80 with three 30s, 30 lengths seats. light



Harrington semi with box cage. Circus World Museum collection.

plant, all props. if you have cash and mean business. Wire. Must sell this week. III health cause. \$3,000, \$2,000 cash will handle. Equipment on fair grounds, Greenfield, Indiana. E. A. Harrington."

Fred Dahlinger Jr. recently examined the John Robinson Circus collection at the Cincinnati Historical Society. In addition to finding the telegram from Harrington to John Robinson he found a most interesting letter from Walter L. Main to Robinson regarding the Harrington show and also its reply.

The letter was dated June 19, 1934. It is too long to run intact as Main generally reviews his history in show business and in particular from 1930 when according to Main he rescued William (Honest Bill) Newton with one elephant and a few cages broke in Louisiana and got him going for the season using the Walter L. Main title with Main personally in advance.

He pitched a deal for John IV and himself to buy and operate the Harrington show. Main suggests using the Walter L. Main title with Main personally in advance and either John IV or his father John III back managing the show. Old Walter L. with a reputation of being one of the slickest in the business says there is \$400 worth of billing paper with Pawnee Bill's name on it which they could use out in the country, meaning it might not fly in the big towns with the city slickers but would out in the rural areas with the rubes and clod knockers. Main had it all figured out so they could buy the show for no more than \$1,700 down and he knew where the balance could be financed on time, Main, ever the sharpie, suggested the three Robinson elephants be leased to the show and also the Walter L. Main title and they would balance each other out. John

Robinson. still owned three elephants from the original herd, Clara, Pitt, and Tony which were still active in the 1930s being leased to various circuses and carnivals. The author saw the John Robinson Military elephants as the nightly free act with the John A. Marks baggage cars and

trucks playing the Athens, Georgia Fair in the fall of 1939. Main in his letter said that Robinson would be free to send the elephants elsewhere during the season, and if so, a fee could be paid Robinson replied the next day that his father, John IV, had gone to the hospital that to have a growth removed from his throat and although in plenty of pain doctors said that if absence of any complication he would recover, John said as far as the title he would use his own name with either the Junior or the Fourth attached as he had nothing to do with the sale of the John Robinson Circus some years back. John IV ended his letter hoping that Main could work out something satisfactory for himself.

The June 20 edition of the *Greenfield Daily Mirror* reported that the Harrington circus stranded in Greenfield at the fairgrounds had been sold to "southern circus men" and it would remain there about ten more days before returning to the road again. The purchaser was W. F. Duggan Sr., same person who had placed the "Will Buy Circus" ad in the June 16 *Billboard*. Duggan added some more trucks and equipment and had leased the elephant Coleman. Mena, which had been on Howard King's Rice Bros. Circus earlier in 1934.

The title of the show was Duggan Bros. Circus. It opened in Greenfield on July 14.

Harrington's many years in show business were now over. He died March 31 in San Antonio, Texas. Services in San Antonio were held there with Elks Lodge 216 officiating. His obituary was printed in the April 20, 1940 *Billboard*.

The author wishes to thank the following for invaluable help in the preparation of this article, Fred Dahlinger Jr., Circus World Museum, Don Marcks, John Polacsek, and Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

Two Celebrated Riders

William and James Dutton

By John Daniel Draper

Probably the greatest principal bareback act from the viewpoint of numbers (8 horses) was that of James Dutton (1879-1928). According to the official obituary, he was born in Melbourne, Australia on October 10, 1879. The adopted son of William and Effie Dutton, he was to have a very successful career as a wire walker and a principal rider.

An early published record of James Dutton's performing was given in the Sells Bros. Circus route book for 1895. In that year he appeared in Display 5 in an "exhibition of beauty, grace and elegance" on the invisible wire, along with eight other artists including Effie, his foster mother. Later, in Display 12 he did a principal bareback act in Ring 2 opposite Frank Melville. In Display 14, Effie presented a "daring bareback" act opposite that of Polly Lee.

In the year 1895 his father had been in the circus business for 35 years. It was said that Billy Dutton, a native of Toronto, Canada, had performed the great feat of a triple somersault while a member of Robinson & Lakes' Circus at Elkhorn, Illinois, in 1860, the year of his circus debut, at a rehearsal in the presence of the famous clown, John Lawton. Dutton continued on Robinson and Lake's Circus & Menagerie in 1861-1862, on Robinson & Bros. Circus and Menagerie in 1863 and on John Robinson's Circus and Menagerie in 1864-1865. A newspaper ad for 1864 hailed him as a youthful bareback rider and champion leaper.

In 1865 he married Iza Stone and two sons, Arthur and William, Jr., resulted from this union. William Dutton was equestrian director and bareback rider on George W. DeHaven's Circus in 1866-

1867. His great equestrian feat on a flying bareback steed was entitled "Winged Mercury." His graceful and dashing equestrian performances during the previous winter in New York City and in the West Indies had won him the reputation of the "most accomplished somersault rider of the age." As a batoute leaper he had no equal. His grand leap for life from the springboard defied competition.

William Dutton (1843-1906) and Willie Milson appeared in a wonderful double somersault act, each turning twice in the air before alighting. Also in 1867, an ad in the *Lisbon, New Hampshire Press* of October 14th for the Great U. S. Circus listed Dutton as the "champion somersault eccentric voltigeur and principal tumbler." In the winter of 1866-1867 Willie Dutton had been a performer on Yankee Robinson's Coliseum & Zoological Garden at State and Washington Streets in Chicago.

The infant, Arthur, rode on L. B. Lent's Circus when his father was there in 1868. In 1871 on the New

York Circus Mlle Caroline Rolland, Charles W. Fish, Lucy Watson and William Dutton were advertised as the four best riders in the world. In 1871 William Dutton was also listed as a bareback equitationist on P. T. Barnum in its first season on the road. The next year on Lent's New York Circus, he and his son rode in a carrying act. Even in this early period, his graceful horsemanship won the highest honors ever awarded to any equestrian from the most critical audiences of all nations. He stood absolutely unrivaled in his famous act with his charming infant son, Arthur.

William Dutton's wife died in 1873 and he married again in June of 1874. His new bride was Helene Smith, the daughter of William Smith, Sr., a 4 horse circus rider. That year on the Adam Forepaugh Circus the bareback horsemen were William Dutton, W. M. Monroe and Hamilton. In February Dutton had departed for Philadelphia for practicing and getting in trim for the season.

In 1875 Willie Dutton, on the Adam Forepaugh show with his somersaults through balloons, was hailed in his equestrian act as the "Pride of Canada." His name was also listed on a P. T. Barnum herald in a group of 28 equestrians.

In addition to his affiliations with other circuses during the next three seasons through 1878, he was also on Adam Forepaugh for parts of all of those years.

William Dutton and Mons. Franconie in 1876 were hurdle riders on Rothchild's Circus (Pogey O'Brien, proprietor). Fate was hard on both Dutton and Romeo Sebastian,

William Dutton featured on the Barnum and London show. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.



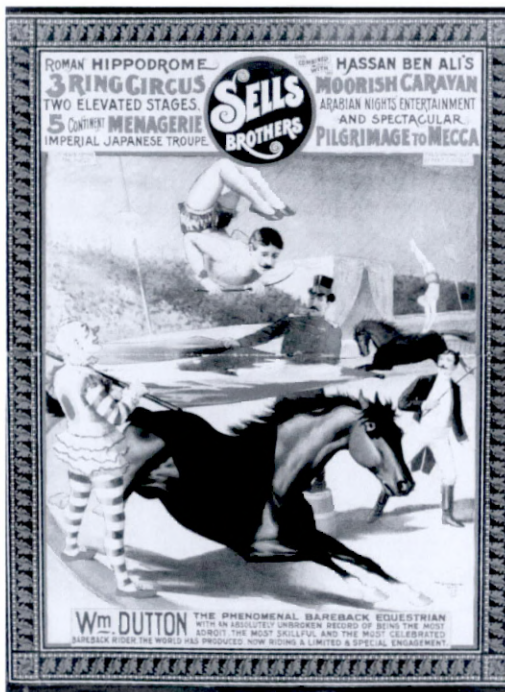
appearing on Adam Forepaugh in 1877. One day Dutton seriously sprained his foot in jumping from his horse and Sebastian, in making his first public appearance as a bareback rider, fell from his horse at least four times while attempting to do some difficult feats. Nearly all the horsemanship that year was bareback riding.

The next year, under a Forepaugh big top of a 145 round plus one 50 and with the champion ticket seller, Ben Lusbie, there were at least four champion riders, Frank Melville, W. M. Monroe, Madam Berdeau and Madame Rolland, in addition to William Dutton with his "principal act of polite equestrianism."

William Dutton in 1879 did his wonderful equestrianism on the Great London Circus of Cooper & Bailey. Also, in batoute leaping he was one of 22 participants. In the following year on this same show Dutton, in his grand principal horsemanship, was listed as America's finest trick rider, the "Apollo Belvidere of the Arena," opposite Charles Fish in his bounding jockey and astonishing bareback riding. For all of the next seven seasons beginning in 1881 Dutton was on the Barnum & London Circus except for the 1886 season with the W. W. Cole Circus.

In 1881 and 1882 he did principal somersault and pirouette bareback riding. For both years Dutton, the distinguished equestrian, rode opposite Adelaide Cordona in her principal bareback riding and flaming zone hurdles. In 1882 his act was clowned by the immortal Billy Burke. He also participated in the grand tumbling tournament presented by three companies in three rings. The leapers were headed by William N. Batchellor and Frank Gardner.

The next year the riders were Orrin Hollis, Viola Rivers and Linda Jeal and in 1885 Orrin Hollis in his somersault act, Charles Fish, all world champion, and Linda Jeal in her bareback hurdle act rode opposite Dutton's principal back evolutions. He also rode a five horse bareback act. William Dutton's wife, Helene, was an entree rider in both 1884 and 1885. Other entree riders at that time were Mrs. Orrin Hollis



William Dutton featured on Sells Bros. Circus. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

and Mattie Jackson. On June 10th, 1885 Billy Dutton fell from his horse in Boston striking an iron stake and severely injuring his foot. He was unable to ride for several weeks. At Lynn, Massachusetts on June 24th he was slowly recovering from the effects of his fall. He remained in the sleeping cars and was attended by Helene, his wife, who was a grand nurse. On July 3rd at Bangor, Maine he was sufficiently recovered to lay aside his crutches and the next day at Ellsworth, Maine he came to the lot and walked about without his crutches. On July 15th in Portland, Maine he rode for the first time in six weeks.

The last season for W. W. Cole was 1886. Dutton was on the show doing his champion equestrian somersaulting and was one of three in the Roman races, three times around the track. Also on the show was W. F. Carver, champion shot and the "Evil Spirit of the Plains."

Early in the 1887 season William Dutton was billed to be on John B. Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Circus and E. D. Colvin's Wild West.

The next season most of this group, including Dutton, rode on Sells Bros. and S. H. Barrett. After the circus

closed he was busy at quarters breaking stock.

In January of 1889 Helene Smith Dutton sued for divorce from William Dutton. Effie Orgust was named as the correspondent. In that year, Showles, Dutton and Willie Sells were all riding on Sells & Barrett. Also, Mrs. William Dutton was listed on the performers' roster as a flat race rider. Presumably, this person was Dutton's new wife, Effie. Helene had never performed except as an entree rider.

The first specific mention of Effie Dutton was in 1890 when it was stated in the *New York Clipper* in August that she was "doing remarkably well with the principal equestrian act and will at no distant day become one of the leaders of her profession." She was also riding manege in Display 5 on Sells & Barrett as "Queen of the side saddle." Billy Burke clowning the act with his comical donkey.

In the meanwhile, in the fall of 1889 P. T. Barnum had taken a group of American performers to Olympia in London for the winter season. Dutton served as equestrian director for the London performances which featured five riders, William Showles, William Sells, William DeMott, John O'Brien and Alexander Seabert.

The Sells Bros. program for 1891 included "artistic feats of equestrians" and Roman standing riding by Dutton as well as Effie's side saddle presentation and her participation in a lady's flat race and an English hurdle race. That year in travelling through southern Oregon and northern California, the show train of 52 cars required one engine for each 13 cars because of the steep grades encountered.

In an interview during the 1891 San Francisco engagement, Dutton had a number of interesting comments about standing riding and how it was done. First you stood properly on the horse "with the right shoulder turned towards the horse's head. The springiness must all come from the ball of the foot, not from the knees. That is why the toes must bear so much of the weight. The tendency to ride on the heels is the first thing a beginner must overcome.

"When I learned to ride bareback, thirty odd years ago, we had no mechanics. When I had got so that I could hang a saddle like a cowboy from Texas they gave me a pad. That made a regular flat platform of the horse's back. On this I learned to stand up. Then from a regular dancing teacher I learned to step gracefully and gradually I got so I could do all these steps on the pad. When I had thoroughly learned how to hold my balance I went ahead with the fancy tricks. Of course I got lots of falls before I learned, but the practice ring was covered with soft tan bark and I was not hurt.

"Now when I practice I use the mechanic. During a performance I have to take chances on getting my neck broken. That's what I am paid for, but no rider cares to take any more chances than he has to."

After the regular 1891 season, Sells Bros. embarked on a tour of Australia that continued until the summer of 1892. Billy Dutton was one of four bareback equestrians and also a Roman standing race rider, while Effie did her high school side saddle act and was a jockey rider in the ladies' flat race and English hurdle race.

Returning to America for the regular 1892 season, William and Effie repeated the offerings they had done in Australia. William Dutton also was one of the fifteen leapers and tumblers on the show. In Oakland, California and in San Francisco Effie drove five horses in tandem over hurdles, gates and bars. In the Sells Bros. route book that season we find the first mention of James Dutton, who was listed as an aerial artist. He was at that time a lad of about thirteen years of age.

After a season on Sells & Rentfrow, where William did his his forward and backward somersaults on the bareback of a swiftly running steed and Effie also rode. The Duttons next appeared on Barnum & Bailey in 1894. Effie did a "graceful and accomplished exhibi-

tion of daring high wire specialties."

James Dutton. Circus World Museum collection.

Also in Display 3 she was one of three ladies doing a principal equestrian act. The other two individuals were Linda Jeal and Rose Meers. Doc Waddell in a December 8, 1928 *Billboard* article pointed "with pride and admiration to her "Little Mother of Rosin-Back Realm." On March 29th, Jimmie Dutton took a tumble during a race of his pony against a horse. Two days later, the Duttons, William, Effie and their son, left the show.

The last year on the Sells Bros. Circus was 1895. All three Duttons were on the circus that season. Jimmie and Effie each did a bareback principal act and also the wire walking act. William was equestrian director on Hummel & Hamilton Circus during the following season. In 1897 all three were together again, this time on Howes' Great London Circus. Again, William was equestrian director. James did his principal somersault riding and Effie her principal act.

From 1898 through 1903 William, Effie and James were on John Robinson's Circus. From the record in the show's ledger for 1898, William Dutton and family, performers, were paid \$75.00 per week from April 27th until November 7th for a season total of \$2,075.



Effie Dutton. Circus World Museum collection.

In a John Robinson's newspaper ad for April 27, 1898 in Baraboo, Wisconsin, a Nellie Dutton was also listed as a rider. Who she may have been is unknown. James did marry a childhood friend, Nellie



Jordan, but this marriage took place 25 years later.

James Dutton in 1899 to 1901 performed an excellent bounding wire act and did principal bareback trick riding including the double pirouette, the last "gilt edge" feature, advertised as the only one in America. In 1902 he rode his six horse act, increased the number of horses to eight in 1903 and also added a triple carrying act with Effie and another lady. Effie, during these years, did her highly finished principal riding act and her pretty slack wire evolutions. In addition to James, she appeared with such riders as W. O'Dell, Rose Dockrell, Kitty Kruger, Josie DeMott, Winnie Van Skake, Frank Miller and Romeo Sebastian. William Dutton had returned to John Robinson's Circus after a thirty eight year absence, serving as equestrian director from 1899 until 1901.

As was the custom among professional equestrians in those days, the Duttons in 1901 tried to adopt a young boy, Henry Giltz, and mold him into another rider such as James Dutton had become. He was an eleven year old whose mother had died and whose father was in a hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio with a broken leg. The boy, in wandering about, finally arrived at the training stables of John Robinson's Circus. As he was watching the activities there, he attracted the attention of Effie Dutton, who took a fancy to him and began to train him to ride a horse in the ring. He did so well the Duttons decided to take him along if they could adopt him. His father's consent was obtained and he was adopted by the Duttons. However, a sister of the boy so violently opposed the adoption that Mr. & Mrs. Dutton were forced to surrender him.

That same year they adopted Clarence Farrell, a homeless nine year old boy, from the House of Refuge in Cincinnati and sought to make a performer of him. Nothing more was ever reported about this effort.

Dutton and Effie were performers on Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Circus in 1904. He was one of three riders in the thrilling Roman standing race, the third event presented on the hippodrome track. The other participants were Peter Bell and Thomas Cook.

The next year William Dutton was one of ten bareback riders appearing on Norris & Rowe Circus. The other riders were Rose Dockrill, Frank & Dolly Miller, Estelle Settler, M'lle Julian, George Holland, Austin King, Joseph Lyons and Herbert Rumley. After retiring, William joined John Robinson's Circus at Ashtabula, Ohio in July to be with his wife and son. James was then demonstrating equestrian skill and grace in a carrying act with Winnie Van. In another act he rode and drove 8 horses at one time. Over a period of time he refined this act by devising "some very impressive feats in the manipulation of the horses, one of the greatest being the straddling of two animals, while the other six, in single file, passed underneath him." In 1905 James Dutton was also the assistant equestrian director under Fred Fisher. Effie worked on the frail and swinging wire and also did her champion principal trick riding.

James Dutton and Mlle Winnie Van did a grand spectacular double riding act in 1906. Winnie Van, a pleasing and graceful principal rider, was actually the wife of Ed Van Shaik, sometime ticket seller, legal adjuster or big show announcer on John Robinson. Also in 1906, along with Claude Orton and Dan Leon, James Dutton was one of the three assistant equestrian directors to Fred Fisher. Effie Dutton was appearing on the Sells-Floto Circus. On October 18th of that year, William Dutton was assaulted and robbed on a street in Cincinnati. At the age of 63, he died of a fractured skull a few months after the attack, never having recovered. Interment was at Milford, Ohio.

William Dutton, Jr. became a clown and a principal tumbler and leaper. He performed on Cooper & Co's Circus (1896), Lemen Bros. (1901), John

Robinson's Circus (1902) and Sells & Downs (1902, 1903, 1905). In 1903 as a principal double somersault leaper and clown, he was paired with William Van Dee. In 1904 he was one of the twenty-seven clowns on Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros.

Continuing on John Robinson's Circus in 1907, James Dutton expanded his carrying act into an original triple carrying cast act where he held Effie on one shoulder and Winnie Van on the other in the style of the latest foreign novelty as he rode Roman style in the ring. He also did a bounding somersault on the wire and rode his eight horse act. Both Effie and Winnie presented their dashing principal acts.

Beginning the next year on Ringling Bros. Circus, James Dutton presented the Three Duttons in one of the handsomest cart riding acts ever devised. The two young ladies assisting him varied from time to time--Winnie Van, Kate Leipnik, Addie Leipnik and others. The white four wheel English cart or buggy was drawn by two white horses hitched sometimes in tandem and sometimes abreast. Special electrical effects were used, making it a glorious picture. When the horses were hitched side by side, James Dutton stood Roman style holding a lady on each shoulder. Everything was in white. The New York *Clipper* for April 11, 1908 gave a very authentic description: "The Three Duttons have a high cart, in which they drive into the ring of the Ringling show, the horses being harnessed in tandem. They go

James Dutton on Ringling Bros. in 1906. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.



through evolutions from the cart to the backs of the horses, leaping, jumping, climbing, turning flip-flaps, and doing all with extraordinary ease. The horses are cream white, the cart, white and gold, and the costumes of the trio are in accordance, as regards the tinting, making a very pretty display. Their finale is clever in that the lead horse is fastened by a kind of harness which gives out to a great length and makes some of the acrobatic work all the more difficult. The act was a great success and was warmly applauded." Variations of this act were presented from 1908 through 1911. It was a real Society Circus act.

In *Billboard* comments on the 1912 Ringling program, we read: "The Rooneys introduce a sensational cart-riding act which brought back pleasant memories of the Duttons, who were features last year (1911) in one of the prettiest acts of this class ever witnessed. The Rooneys' offering is not as elaborate nor spectacular as that of the Duttons, but it is certainly clever and pleased the most fastidious."

Concurrently, James was presenting his eight horse act. The wordings of the Dutton contracts for both 1909 and 1911 are similar: "Novelty cart act with two horses, including storage battery electric lights, two ladies and one gentlemen. Ladies' principal acts, when required, for emergency only. Furnish horses for above acts. Eight horse act, horses furnished by employers, to be worked by Mr. Dutton in gladiator costume, costume to be furnished by Mr. Dutton. Salary is \$150 per week."

In March of 1909 James Dutton returned from an engagement with Circus Schuman in Berlin with the intention of returning to Europe at the end of the 1909 season. In December of 1911 he opened with an engagement at the St. Louis Hippodrome.

After her 1912 season as a rider on the Rhoda Royal show in the late winter and then on Sells-Floto, Effie Dutton retired from the circus ring. In order to keep busy, she took a course in shorthand and bookkeeping. Later she appeared on the dramatic stage as Polly in "Polly of

the Circus."

After an engagement at the New York Hippodrome in 1915, James Dutton took his "America's most beautiful equestrian act" on the fair circuit. In 1917 he opened in August at the Hamilton County Fair, Carthage, Ohio. He enjoyed great success at fairs and in vaudeville. A patriotic feature was added in 1917. "A buglar played assembly and at the last note the beautiful white stallion, "Woodrow Wilson," mounted by a rider in a white uniform and carrying the U. S. flag came prancing down the track and entered the ring directly in front of the grandstand. The band struck up the national air and every man, woman and child in the grandstand stood at attention. The flag, made to order for Jimmie Dutton, was of pure Japanese silk, mounted on a 12 foot oak staff with the eagle on top. Shortly after the appearance of "Woodrow Wilson," the Duttons driving snow white horses, "Babe" and "Mack", to a white run-about entered the ring and began the performance. It has to seen to be appreciated."

Dutton's riding partners at this time were Winnie and Adeline Dutton, advertised as his sisters. A Sells & Rentfrow Circus ad for 1893 declared the Dutton Sisters as "undoubtedly the finest lady riders on earth." Winnie was actually the daughter of C. L. Gee, an old troupier, who died in 1922. Whether or not these two ladies were actually James' sisters and had been adopted by the Duttons is not clear. In 1909 they had been in Berlin with horses at the same time that James Dutton was with Circus Schuman. They returned to New York in March on the liner *Ryndam*. The horses "Babe" and "Mack" were on board and during the voyage "the girls walked them around and eventually began doing riding acts" on shipboard.

The *Billboard* of December 20, 1919 described a very sad event for The Duttons' Society Equestrian act: "This is the tale of a horse, whose courage was supreme, though he never was on a battlefield. He lived and died an actor, a cheerful performer to the end. He was a big, white fellow, the equine star of the Dutton Troupe, famous in the circus



The James Dutton carrying act. Circus World Museum collection.

ring and in vaudeville. His last appearance was at the Orpheum Theater, Brooklyn.

"Before the act he dropped his head a little. One of the Misses Dutton patted his neck and asked him if he was feeling poorly. He bravely raised his head, at this, and as the cue music sounded he trotted into the stage arena.

"Not once did he falter. The girls bounced on and off his back unerringly. A dog which frisked in semi-circles between his feet had no fear. The dog knew his big playfellow would be careful and not step on him.

"James Dutton observed the special care the white horse seemed to be taking to be exactly where he was expected to be. He patted this intelligent actor affectionately and the white horse in return gently touched his muzzle to his owner's ear, as if to say: 'You may depend on me.'

"The finish of the act came. Three times the curtain ascended. Like the others, the horse looked happily toward the audience and bowed his appreciation of the applause.

"The curtain descended for the last time. The Dutton girls, in distress, turned their heads as the white horse, with one long, final breath, stretched himself in the center of the stage circus ring. James Dutton burst into tears as he fell to his knees and took in his arms the horse's neck, for the big white fellow was dead."

For the next 8 years until James

Dutton's sudden death in 1928, the Dutton Family & Society Circus performed mostly at fair and Shrine dates and on the vaudeville stages of America. In 1920 the Duttons were one of the leading fair attractions in the South.

On Wednesday evening April 18, 1923 James Dutton married the accomplished circus artist, Nellie Jordan (1888-1974) at the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Born at Norristown, Pennsylvania. She made her circus debut at the age of four with the Flying Jordans (her parents) in Kansas City, Missouri. She was with the Flying Jordan Circus in Australia, India, China, the Philippines, South Africa and finally in Siberia, where the troupe was interned for three years during a war in 1901-1904. Later, she was with Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros., Ringling Bros. and Hagenbeck-Wallace. She was in vaudeville with the Jordan sisters between 1913 and 1921.

On February 5, 1924 Winnie Dutton, long known as the little sister of James Dutton, married W. R. Jessee at Jackson, Mississippi. At the time of her marriage she was playing an engagement with Dutton's Society Circus at the Century Theatre in Jackson. The marriage was kept secret until the troupe arrived in Baton Rouge where a reception was tendered. The bridegroom had been associated with Ralph A. Hankinson in the outdoor amusement world for a number of years. Since the previous October he had been handling press work for Dutton's Society Circus.

In April of 1924 James Dutton's "Society Equestrians of All Circles" played the Shrine Circus in Columbus, Ohio where Nellie did her wire and "loop-the-loop" acts. This engagement closed his winter season. That year the fair bookings for Dutton's All-Star Attractions were capped by an engagement at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, Ontario.

The 1925 season of the Dutton Equestrian Co. began in February at the New York Hippodrome. At the St. Louis Police Circus the equestrians "in the center ring presented a spectacular and gorgeous display in

their all white buggy, bridles, costumes and wigs. With all spotlights focussed on their performance they made a beautiful appearance and went through a difficult routine in natty manner." The company continued with engagements on La Pearl's Circus at Charleston and Huntington, West Virginia, in Cincinnati and Louisville, in Pittsburgh and Akron and in Richmond and Kendallville, Indiana. For the Lakewood Elks in Cleveland, Ohio, the Dutton show was under canvas, a 150 round plus 2-50's. The final fair dates were at Gulfport, Mississippi and Alexandria, Louisiana.

Starting in January in Texas at Victoria and Snakeville, James Dutton's Circus went west to California in 1926 via the Southern Pacific Railroad. It played two and three day stands at Roseville, Truckee, Crockett, Paso Robles, Watsonville, Salinos, and Monterey. Returning east by the Union Pacific it showed at Reno, Lovelock, Winnemucca and Elko, Nevada, at Brigham, Utah and at Evanston, Wyoming. William McK. Bausman routed the circus and was press agent. On the road from 1922-1926, the outfit used a 70 foot baggage car for stock and equipment as it did fairs and parks under auspices. It had its own big top and dressing and horse tents. The Dutton Society act comprising two women and one man used two horses in tandem hitched to a four wheel cart.

Vera Bruce joined the Duttons in November 1926, coming over from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. She continued on the show in 1927, being introduced in January in the Comedy Riding Surprise at the Miami Police Circus, produced by the Dutton Attractions. Later she was joined by Ida Delno in the Dutton's comedy bareback act. After the Dayton Shrine Circus in April, the Dutton All Star Revue lined up a number of good fair dates.

In the spring of 1928 the Dutton Attractions were putting on beautiful performances at fairs in the South. The show had just arrived in Miami by truck with the stock and baggage after filling engagements at Fort Myers and at Everglades at a celebration connected with the opening of the Tamiami Trail. It was booked as an attraction for a Shrine convention in Miami.



Nellie Dutton and Willie Bausman in the Dutton Society Circus. Circus World Museum collection.

James Dutton died very unexpectedly of a ruptured appendix in Miami on April 28th. He suffered a severe pain just before the night performance.

But the show must go on. He worked his riding act. The pain became more intense. He tightened his rubber belt and went on with his wire walking act. Only when it was finished did he tell of his agony. A doctor was called but it was too late. James Dutton was a member of the Masonic lodge in Cincinnati, Ohio. Burial was in Sarasota, Florida.

Almost 20 years later in an old circus trunk Nellie was keeping the handmade canvas "shoes" that Jimmy wore that night. "Tears came into her eyes as she showed them and said, 'I did a terrible thing. In my grief I washed those shoes. I shouldn't have done it. They should have the resin on them, just as he had rubbed it in before riding. Mother Dutton saved the shoes. Father Dutton wore the last time he rode. The resin is still on them.'"

After her husband's death, Nellie Dutton was the proprietor of the Dutton circus. She became one of the most versatile and talented women of the circus world. She not only owned and ran the show herself, but did acts on the trapeze and tight wire, and worked her elephant,

"Topsy," and did a riding act during the course of each performance. Then she moved into the office and counted the day's receipts.

The riding-carrying idea with horses in tandem drawing a nifty carriage was developed by the Rooneys. The Duttons had a similar act, directed by James' charming widow, Nellie. With her in this program number were the Hollands, George and his loved ones of the old school.

In April of 1929 Nellie bought property for her new winter quarters from the city of Sarasota. It adjoined the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey winter quarters. She constructed buildings for her animals as well as living quarters and a building for giving performances.

In the fall of 1929, after returning from a five week engagement with Santos Artigas in Havana, the Dutton circus moved into its new quarters. It now settled down to a regular schedule of two shows each week for the rest of the winter.

The 1930 season began at the South Florida Fair. The Dutton attractions then featured Myrtle Compton and Peggy Murry in spectacular riding, the Barlows, Madame Maree, William Bausman and Henri Heugi, the Singhalese elephant man, as well as Nellie as a performer and director. The season's route ran from Atlanta to Shrine shows at St. Joseph, Springfield and Joplin, Missouri and then east for a 15 week engagement at Luna Park, Coney Island.

The next year Isabel and Reno McCree, Jr. were featured riders as the troupe moved from the Miami Shrine Circus in February to the Missouri State Fair in June. The Dutton Circus gave a complete and well balanced program. "Reno McCree, Jr. did clowning in his leaping act. Mrs. Nellie Dutton, assisted by Danny Mitchell, offered a lively performance on the tight wire. Clowns followed with Danny Mitchell, Reno McCree and DeMilo offering some good old fashioned one ring circus comedy, including the midget mule 'Spark Plug.' A graceful aerial number by Mrs. Dutton was given in great style. The Duttons' well known feature act followed,

looking more beautiful than ever in Colonial costume, with three snow white horses drawing an equally white carriage. W. McK. (Mac) Bausman, who has handled the understanding role in this act since the death of the originator, James Dutton, left little to be desired in a beautiful and spectacular performance. The wardrobe was immaculate and reflected the constant attention of Mrs. Dutton. The act took several bows. The Dutton comedy act was introduced by several fast routines by Isabel and Reno McCree and finished with the presentation of the mechanic comedy. This feature was given in great style with Mrs. Dutton handling the rope and Danny Mitchell furnishing some excellent bump comedy. Students were not planted in the audience but were excellent foils for the comedy which sent the crowd home still laughing after Bausman's well worded and delivered Good Night announcement."

In January 1934 the Duttons were on Monge Bros. Circus in Venezuela when it split into the Dutton Circus and the Monge Family Circus. News was sent back to the States by W. McK. Bausman at Maracaibo. The new Monge show would have no animals and would be chiefly a family acrobatic act for theaters in Venezuela. The Dutton Circus, directed by Nellie was presented under a 90 foot round canvas with 1-40 and featured Nellie's wire act, the Dutton Equestrian Revue, "Topsy," the big elephant, the Dutton comedy riders and "Sandino," the trained camel.

After returning to the United States, Nellie Dutton with her equestrian revue, riding act, trained camel and riding school appeared in November on the Monker Grotto show at South Norwalk, Connecticut and at Bob Morton's Toronto Shrine date.

In preparation for the 1935 season, the Dutton Equestrian Revue, with the horses and trained camel, "Sandino," stayed in January at Frank Wirth's winter quarters in Hawthorne, New Jersey to make new wardrobe and new press photos. It opened

with Frank Wirth's Circus at the Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore. The Duttons then went on a secession of shrine dates: Bob Morton Shrine Circus (Atlanta, Philadelphia, Buffalo); Frank Wirth Shrine Circus (Hartford, Connecticut); Hamid-Morton Shrine Circus (Fort Worth and Houston). At the latter date they were under a canvas a 120 foot round plus a 3-50's big top. They also played on the Barnes Carruthers' Great European Olympic Circus at the Michigan State Fair in the Coliseum at Detroit and on James Bell Co's Circus. William McKenna Bausman was the equestrian director. The 1935 program included the usual riding act, the comedy riding mechanic, the high school camel and wire, aerial and contortion routines.

In the middle of May Effie Dutton, then a resident of Long Island, spent a month with Nellie's amusement unit. She was nearing 70 years of age and had not ridden a principal act in 23 years. She tackled it and for an old lady got "to my feet very good but did it make me sore!"

By December of 1935 the Dutton Attractions were planning to go to Ivan Bros. International Circus in Australia for an engagement. All acts were included except the high school camel, banned from that country because it was a cloven footed animal.

After appearing on Pagel's Circus in South Africa for about six years, Nellie Dutton and William Bausman sailed from Durban, South Africa in

Nellie Dutton and Bagdad on Dailey Bros. Circus in 1944. Pfening Archives.



April of 1941 and arrived in New York in the middle of May.

Back in America they were then on Frank Wirth Circus (1942), Russell Bros. (1942-1943), Dailey Bros. (1944).

On Russell Bros. this Equestrian Revue was introduced by ballet girls. Nellie also presented "Bagdad," the "worlds" only trained high school camel."

At an outdoor circus victory program on Russell Bros. in downtown Portland, Oregon in July 1943, Nellie offered free rides on "Bagdad." This feature was played-up considerably in the newspapers. Three years later "Bagdad" was very tragically lost in a fire at the Frank J. Walter horse barn in Houston.

In 1945 on the St. Louis Police Circus the Riding Duttons offered a brilliant picture with Carl Randall's ballet of 36 girls.

There then followed a succession of dates on various circuses: James M. Cole (1947); Braly Circus (1948); Dales Bros. Circus (1949, 1950); Santos & Artigas (1951), and E. K. Fernandez (1952). Other performers in the Dutton Revue during this period were Ida Mae Curley (1947, 1951), Jimmie Stutz (1947) and in 1951 Frankie Lou Wood, Henry Crowell, Fay Meiskey and Lou Frazier. The 1952 E. K. Fernandez Circus date was in Tokyo. It was in this year that Nellie quit bareback riding at the age of 64. Her last performance was near the Alaskan border at Prince Rupert, Canada. She and Bausman had just wound up their 14 week engagement in Tokyo, having played before the Japanese Imperial Family, and were on their way home.

Some years earlier Nellie and William Bausman had married. After a long illness, Effie Dutton died on February 1, 1956 at the age of 89 at Bethpage, New York. She was perhaps the last survivor of the famous Sells Bros. Circus that made the memorable tour of Australia in 1892.

In 1963 Nellie Dutton was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and Bausman was suffering from cancer of the larynx. Eleven years later, survived by her husband, Nellie died at the age of 85.

Frank A. Robbins

a most successful failure

PART EIGHT

By Robert Sabia

1892-1904 the interim years 1899-1904-quiet times

From the depths of depression associated with his string of failures at ownership, Robbins must have gone though hell trying to find himself again. The fact that he had at least two children and a wife to support (Winona, Milton and of course Mattie) must have provided sufficient incentive to go on. It is doubted that at this time he was providing any support to his son, Frank Jr. It is not clear if his daughter (Reine) was still alive, and as circumstances are later revealed, he wasn't paying any alimony to his former wife, Fannie. Unless he was incapacitated during 1899, knowing Mr. Robbins as we do, it must be presumed that he was working somewhere, most likely related to show business. However our close review of trade publications have not evidenced a scintilla of information on his whereabouts.

In 1900, a brief note indicates that he may spend some of that season in the office of the Sig Sautelle wagon show. This would not be surprising as he and Sautelle had a lifelong friendship and if a job were available on the Sautelle Circus, most assuredly it would be Frank A.'s for the asking. Fred Dahlinger uncovered an ad in a trade publication that indicated Robbins was managing a part of a carnival during the earlier part of the season.

During the early days of 1901, Robbins became the general agent for the Rhoda Royal Winter Circus, which was touring the Deep South during the coldest months. This show failed in Georgia in early March after a most confusing tour which seemed to have a contin-

uing major management dispute as to which owner or principal was actually running the show. Although Robbins didn't appear to be involved in this dispute in any way, it certainly affected the show's prospects for success. After this experience, he connected with the Sun Bros. Circus as side show manager but this engagement didn't seem to last very long.

Somehow, this period of uncertainty came to an end, and once again it involved his friend Sig Sautelle.

Late 1901-1904 focused and back at it Sig Sautelle was a circus owner who had enjoyed a reasonable amount of success operating small circuses primarily in the New York State and New England territories. He was particularly noteworthy for his successful canal circuses that he operated for some time in the 1880's throughout the rather extensive canal network in New York State that was dominated by the Erie Canal. Augmenting the Erie were a number of feeder canals, some of which accessed the Finger Lakes

thereby greatly increasing the playing territory of his show. The size of his canal circus was impressive, and it played many of the same dates annually. Eventually, Sautelle's ambitions exceeded the wherewithal of the canal system to satisfy, so in the late 1880's he went out on wagons. Within a short period of time, the Sig Sautelle wagon circus grew to become equivalent to a ten-car railer. He established a permanent winter quarters in the village of Homer, New York, just outside the town of Cortland, around 50 miles directly south of Syracuse. This became his home for many years. Where and when the idea to establish a Sig Sautelle rail show in 1902 came is not known. It may be that Frank A. had more than a small role in developing this notion. In any event, Robbins had the major part in bringing this goal to fruition.

In late summer and early fall of 1901, Robbins became the agent of Sautelle in the purchase of rail equipment and other materials, paraphernalia, animals which would be used to frame a mid size railer of at least fifteen cars and possibly up to twenty. He was very active in scouring the mid-west for these

items and his activity was regularly reported upon in the trade publications, primarily *The Clipper*. That he was successful in his charge became obvious because in the spring of 1902, the Sig Sautelle rail circus was introduced to the entertainment world. This writer does not know Robbins arrangements with Sautelle. However, it would be reasonable to expect that he was paid a stipend and expenses when pursuing

Frank A. Robbins newspaper ad used in 1901. Pfening Archives.

Frank A. Robbins'
NEW AND GREATEST
ALL FEATURE SHOWS

Montclair, New Jersey **FRIDAY, APRIL 26th**

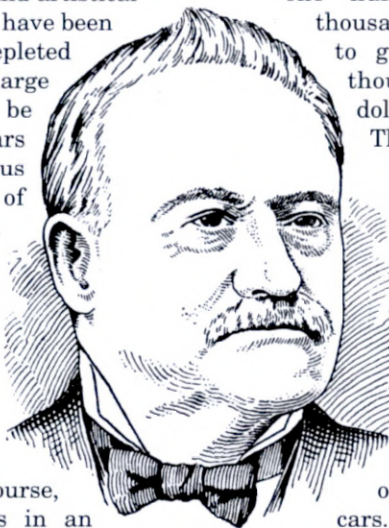
A Monster Menagerie of Wild Beasts !
Roman Hippodrome Races ! !
Special High Class Circus Acts of all kinds ! ! !

Grand Free Street Parade, 10 A. M.

Two performances daily, rain or shine; 2 and 8 P. M. Doors open 1 and 7 P. M.

his Agency role. Later, Frank A. went to quarters at Homer, receiving the items that he had purchased, and integrated them into the existing equipment inventory of Sig Sautelle. I expect that this framing activity took most of the period from the New Year to the actual launching of the railer. During the season, Frank A. became the general manager of the show and continued in that capacity throughout the 1902-1904 seasons. For at least some of this time and probably all of it, Frank A. and his wife Mattie had the privileges on the circus. His arrangement may have been duplicative of the agreement that he had with Robert Hunting about a decade earlier. It is not the intent of this writing to recount the events on the Sig Sautelle circus during this period as tempting as this may be. However it does appear that this circus was successful both in terms of financially and artistically. If so, Robbins would have been able to replenish his depleted war chest, perhaps to a large measure. It will be recalled that his 3 years with the Hunting's circus provided the means of launching the 1896 Van Amburgh gilly circus.

Sig Sautelle, king of the wagon shows. Pfening Archives.



Robbins' relationship with Sig Sautelle was one of trust. Of course, one would expect this in an agency relationship. But it seems that it went beyond the somewhat clear boundaries of agent/principal. For instance, it was reported in the *Billboard* in April 1903, that Robbins traveled to Geneva, Ohio to meet with Walter L. Main and his general agent regarding splitting the Canadian territory during the forthcoming season. Both Sautelle and Main often played the same areas and the same size towns and cities, and to avoid ruinous competition would in the best interest of everyone except the small boy who would only get to see only one show instead of the two. Whatever Frank A. agreed to bound the Sig Sautelle circus.

So highly thought of was Robbins by the very careful and parsimonious Walter L. Main, that on November 25, 1902 Mr. Main made the following offer to Robbins, "To manage his entire show, fifteen (\$15.00) dollars per week from the date of acceptance until the show is on the road, and his expenses when away from home doing business for Main. Sixty-five (\$65.00) dollars per week from the time the show starts on the Road until it closes. Twenty-five (\$25.00) dollars per week gratuity if Robbins remains the entire season, and everything is carried out per contract, which will be made after acceptance. Fifteen (\$15.00) dollars per week from the time the show closes until everything is put away again. Main to board Robbins' wife and two youngest children free during the season. Should Robbins succeed in making a stock company for

one hundred (\$100,000) thousand dollars, Main to give Robbins two thousand (\$2,000) dollars of his stock.

This proposition to hold good until the fifth (5th) day of December, to be accepted or rejected by Robbins." It may be recalled that Mr. Main greatly expanded his circus for the 1903 season, traveling on a reported 41 cars. However, Robbins wasn't on them as he apparently refused this offer to remain with Sig Sautelle. But this did not damage his relationship with Main.

There was one additional event that took place during this period that is a strong indication that Frank A. was climbing back to financial respectability—he declared bankruptcy! I suspect that the legacy of the 1898 season was preventing him from accumulating any meaningful capital. In spite of the imaginative property ownership arrangements that were evidenced during the hearing in Hartford, Frank A. must have been destitute for a substantial period of time. It may be that he had

another hospital stay recuperating from a demon rum attack, particularly during the 1899 time frame. In order to accumulate some monies and to avoid them being recaptured by his creditors, bankruptcy may have been the only realistic alternative. In any event the *Billboard* of August 6, 1902 contained the following article, "Frank A. Robbins, a well known old-time circus man, filed a petition in voluntary bankruptcy in the United States District Court in Brooklyn. Robbins traveled with Barnum & Bailey for a number of years, filling many places, including those of general manager and advertising agent for the circus, and recently was traveling with a circus in Australia. Robbins has many friends in the business, and several well-known circus men are ready to back him a new enterprise." Except for having many friends in the business, this doesn't sound much like the Frank A. Robbins that we know. He never was on Barnum & Bailey to the best of our collective knowledge. Further he was never in Australia although in 1889 he pined for that virgin territory. Nevertheless knowing how he immediately corrected other trade publication misstatements about him and he took no such action here, it was probably Robbins himself that provided the *Billboard* with this resume of misinformation. Those that knew him knew better, and those that didn't didn't, and it didn't make any difference.

The success of the Sautelle circus must have been noticed by the circus industry in general, and the role that Robbins was playing in this success, in specific. He always had a cadre of show business folks who were most willing to support him financially and the 1902-1904 successes solidified this base. As the 1904 season drew to a close, a series of events may have precipitated Robbins reentry into the exhaled ranks of circus ownership once again. Frank was back indeed.

1905-drivers, start your engines. A new beginning with a decidedly different ending. That is what it was all about when Robbins started to contemplate the possibilities of his introducing a new circus. To be sure,

he had lost none of his confidence that he could bring a new circus home a winner. After all, is it not true that he organized and was the general agent and manager for of the successful Sig Sautelle Circus for three years? Did he not have highly placed circus executives and businessmen who were willing to invest in a circus of his own? Could he not surround himself on a moment's notice with a cadre of proven circus executives and superintendents who would assume key positions in a new circus? Hadn't he straightened out his financial situation so that there was a clear path ahead to the multifold bounties just waiting to be taken? The answers to all of the foregoing are resounding yes's. So the why nots are positive. What remains is the when.

The when may have been greatly influenced by a situation developing in Europe rather than the United States. When Barnum & Bailey returned from its successful 5-year tour of the Continent, Buffalo Bill took its place, at least equipment wise. Starting with the 1903 season and continuing through 1906, the Buffalo Bill show would travel about Europe, making many of the same cities as did its mentor and part owner, James A. Bailey. However, Buffalo Bill was not a circus and never represented itself to be one. Organizationally and equipment wise, both a circus and wild west show were interchangeable but in presentation, very different. A person could go to a circus one day and a wild west show the next, and never feel that he/she had just seen this performance. As such, long time James A. Bailey associate, Joseph T. McCadden, determined that Europe was ripe for another American circus and he intended to fulfill this perceived demand by organizing a new circus specifically for this purpose. This germ of an idea was being fleshed out by mid 1904.

Like many other circus owners, Sig Sautelle was often prepared to sell his circus to anyone who would offer an attractive price. Some circus owners annually put their pride and joy



Sautelle wagon show letterhead. Pfening Archives.

on the market at the end of any given year just to determine if there were any serious takers. On occasion there were. It may be that Sautelle was especially motivated in 1904 by knowing that his colleague, Frank A., was about to venture out on his own. On the other hand, it also may be that Robbins' determination to start his own show was based on the knowledge that Sautelle was seriously considering selling his circus to Mr. McCadden. It is not clear which precipitated or at least fostered which. It was always understood that Frank A. would return to the ranks of circus owners some day. Could be that Robbins intended to make a deal to take over the Sig Sautelle circus. In the end, it was McCadden who purchased the essence of the Sig Sautelle Circus. It was stated by at least one circus historian that the purchase price was an extraordinary sum of \$120,000. This amount appears to be inordinately excessive, particularly when compared to the contemporary sales price of \$150,000 for the much larger Forepaugh-Sells Circus, which was also believed to be very high at the time. Perhaps the actual price was much, much lower. Nevertheless, whatever it was, the offer was attractive to Sautelle and he accepted it. And, Robbins, either by choice or necessity, was sent on his way to seek new adventures.

In the *Clipper* of November 19, 1904, a significant ad announced the following: "THE BIRTH OF THE BIG ONE Frank A. Robbins Co. ALL NEW GREAT FEATURE SHOWS, All the latest Arsenic Features, and original and super sensational ones only. Leading Circus Acts and Artists, and the greatest of them all.

. . . Anything and everything novel, daring, thrilling and delighting that can be exhibited under canvas." The contact point was Robbins himself operating from 110 W. 34th St., New York City. The ad also stated that

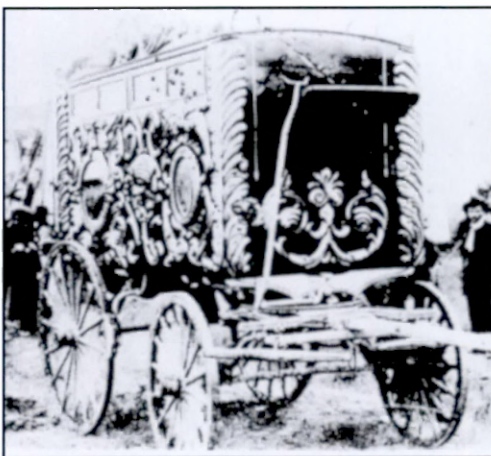
the outfit required 500 individuals of all trades and skills. In addition the general agent, Fred Beckmann, required 200 for the advance crew. Wow, this was really going to be a very big circus. Well, maybe Robbins got a bit carried away when writing this copy. Still, like the Marines, he needed a few good men in addition to those he already assembled.

Fred Beckmann was a well-known and respected circus advance man. He had spent quality time on the Forepaugh and Barnum & Bailey shows amongst others and was seasoned in all ways on the advance. J. C. Banks as legal adjuster joined him. Reporting to Beckmann were contracting agent Dave Haley, Wm. M. Goodman in charge of Advance Car #1 and Charles Coleman responsible for Advance Car #2. Also as will be seen, many of the old time Robbins men came back including for example, Lewis Foster as boss canvasman, the identical position that he held on the Sautelle show. The same issue of the *Clipper* contained a typical Robbins type press release, which did identify both Messrs. Robbins and Beckmann. It also stated the show would be on 25 cars of "...ingenious design and of very large capacity." It told a "spectacular innovation will be 'The Tribunal of Nations,' serving to introduce on magnificent floats, in appropriate costumes, Napoleon Bonaparte, Frederick the Great, the Queen of Holland, the Kings of Austria, Italy, Spain, Denmark and Sweden, the Mikado of Japan and other heroic and conspicuous rulers." Who did he leave out? Perhaps only Nanook of the North.

Nothing was advanced regarding the structure of the firm but it appears to have been a corporation that was chartered in an unknown state under an unknown name. A

check with the New Jersey State Archives revealed nothing in the names that Robbins normally used. Perhaps it was chartered in New York. Letterheads and other articles indicate that Frank A. was President and Fred Beckmann was Treasurer/Vice President and at least some imply that the name of the corporation was "The Frank A. Robbins Co. Incorporated." Lacking specifics on the corporate structure, the secretary of the corporation is not known but it could have been Beckmann. Most jurisdictions require at least two corporate officers to be designated, the president and the secretary. Stockholders are not known. We do know that Louis Cooke and W. W. Cole had involvement in the financing of the show. Louis Cooke held important positions in the advance with major shows such as Barnum & Bailey. He was said to be the owner of a large hotel in Newark, New Jersey. Cole was one of the few circus owners of the past who retired very wealthy. He was called upon from time to time after his retirement to assist a circus undergoing management change such as the Barnum & Bailey in the 1906-1907 periods after the death of James A. Bailey. There may have been one or two others who were financially involved in this Frank A. Robbins' enterprise. A possible candidate in this category was Frank A's good friend, Gil Robinson. It is doubted that anyone other than Messrs. Robbins and Beckmann were actually involved in the operation of the show. While on the road, Charles W. Sprague was identified as "General Secretary" and John L. Glennan as "Treasurer," and press agent. However, it is believed that the titles of secretary and treasurer respectively were descriptive of each gentleman's actual functions on the lot on a day-by-day basis and not as corporate officers.

As we all know, a circus comprises of people and stuff. Generally people represent limited up-front investment. The principal exception to this tenet are those individuals who are actually providing services to the show prior to its opening. These folks often include wagon builders, prop builders, etc. However, stuff is a



The Sautelle mud show ticket wagon. Pfening Archives.

totally different picture. Major investments must be made in the train, equipment, tents, seats, animals, litho designs, etc. up-front, long before the show leaves winter quarters. One of the most, if not the most significant expense for a newly formed show is the train. As near as we can determine, the 1905 Frank A. Robbins train consisted of 2 advance cars, 7 flats, 4 stocks and 3 coaches for a total of 16 cars. There may have been one less flat and one more stock. There were almost certainly two cars in advance during at least some of the season as we have confirmed photos of 2 such cars in 1905. In order to provide some of the train at a minimum cash outlay by this new company, magic was required and magic was therefore performed. By a letter agreement dated February 1, 1905, The Frank A. Robbins Company sold 2 sleepers, 2 stocks, 6 flats and 1 advance car to W. W. Cole for the paid sum of \$4,000. Where did these 11 rail cars come from and how did the firm pay for them to begin with? Train expert Fred Malingier believes that they came from Barnum & Bailey surplus inventory. And where did the \$4,000 come from—most likely from W. W. Cole himself. What appears to be much to do about nothing was in fact an excellent method of protecting Cole's investment in the show. Instead of investing as a stockholder or lending the money to the show in a transaction perhaps secured by the train, he by passed the legal obstacles in protecting his money by actu-

ally owning this portion of the train and merely leasing it to the show. Then if the show encounters financial difficulties, he can step in and assume ownership and control over the train without any legal hassle from secured and/or unsecured creditors. We must never forget a new show is most vulnerable to failure in the initial couple of weeks that it is out. If one is unlucky and runs into two weeks of cold and rain, the season may be over right then and there. Witness 1898 for a salient example. So good tidings aside, Cole was merely protecting his investment at no cost to the Robbins show, while providing the means of acquiring most of the requisite train.

It seems that even after the above transaction was consummated, Robbins was possibly still seeking additional rail cars, perhaps as many as five, in order to achieve the complement delineated above. In a letter now located in the Cincinnati Historical Society from Robbins to Gil Robinson dated February 17, 1905, he discusses former Sautelle rail cars that were then owned by Joseph T. McCaddon and states "I will see him (McCaddon) Monday and see if he will cut his price any and let you know. he asks \$400.00 for the flats and six hundred for stocks. he has three sleeping cars will get price on these. I bought the cars from the Aim? Car Co. in St. Louis in 1901. paid \$300 each for them. put air brakes on them and made stocks out of some of these. the flats cost us about \$400 the stocks \$600 the sleeping cars are Pullman. one filled up with stateroom and berths. the other 2 and 3 tier berths the longer length one holds 96. the other 108." It could be presumed that Robbins was interested in these cars for his show, but it may not be the case. As part owner of the John Robinson Circus with his older brother, John Robinson, Jr. (the Governor), Gil. Robinson may have been interested in these cars for the John Robinson Circus. The disposition of the Sautelle cars is not known.

Early on Robbins established his winter quarters at the old racetrack in Clifton, New Jersey, just south of the large manufacturing city of

Paterson. This was approximately fifteen miles west of the Hudson River and the future location of the George Washington Bridge. Already heavily populated in Passaic County, this general area had excellent access to rail connections in any direction and a fine location to find whatever skilled labor required in the physical framing of the show. It was also in easy commuter distance to Robbins' office in Manhattan and his home in Jersey City.

In the *Clipper* of November 26, 1904, signed on department heads were identified as follows: John Purvis, equestrian director (old Robbins); previously mentioned Lucius Foster, master of canvas (old Robbins); H. R. Craig, master of transportation; Arthur Eldridge, superintendent of horses; Fred Merkle, superintendent of sleeping cars; and William Burke, superintendent of lights. It is also known that Pueter LaBar was superintendent of the blacksmith shop, Eddie Edy, was the property boss, Charles Lowry was the 24 hour man, and Ben Powley had the privilege car. On the lot privileges were under the direction of Mattie Robbins. The side show was provided by Andrews and Doris. This press release was followed by another in the December 17th issue which stated that Lucius Foster had an army of carpenters, blacksmiths, harness makers, wardrobe manufacturers, property men, and grooms working like beavers putting the show together. Not a small task. Foster was identified as General Superintendent, which he may have been during the quarter's activity. However it wasn't long before Robbins' 27-year-old son, Charles, would be joining the traveling show as its general superintendent. This position is not a special blessing on a modest sized railer because it means that you probably work longer hours and harder than any one else. As we shall see, son Charles was up to the job.

As Robbins entered the New Year, he was still seeking a boss property man, more riders, either

male or female, a Japanese troupe, and a superintendent of animals. Lucius Foster required more wagon makers, carpenters and painters to complete the tasks at hand. It seems that most of the baggage wagons were built at quarters under the capable direction of Foster. That may have not been the case with the cages, tableaux and the calliope. Fred Dahlinger advises that the calliope was from the remnants of the wrecked one from the Doris show. It was acquired from Barnum & Bailey, as were the ex-Forepaugh eagle and deer floats. The bandwagon may have been constructed in quarters. It isn't so elaborate that it was beyond the capabilities of a locally hired skilled carpenter and wagon builder. There also were children menagerie cages that appeared to be generally patterned after the John Robinson cottage cages. It seems that Robbins may have been involved with securing a calliope either for him or the John Robinson Circus. In a letter from Robbins to a "Johnnie" dated January 11, 1905 (original at the Cincinnati Historical Society), the accessing a calliope from John Welsh was discussed. Apparently an offer was made to Mr. Welsh and Robbins was confident that it would be accepted. If it was, Frank A. instructed Mr. Welsh to load it and send the bill of lading to him (Johnnie). The whistles were new and located in the house. They would be shipped separately. Johnnie was clearly not John Robinson, Jr. but he may be a person who worked for him. Robbins was

The Robbins family, Frank A., Frank Jr., Winona and Mattie. Pfening Archives.



always wheeling and dealing for someone or other. Some times he would be paid for such services; other times it seems that he would act as courtesy related to friendship.

From the beginning, Robbins was very comfortable in his accustomed role as a circus owner. He attended the sale of Forepaugh-Sells at Columbus, Ohio, on January 10th. As previously mentioned, James A. Bailey surprised the large group of prospective buyers by purchasing the entire show for \$150,000. He then immediately sold half of the show to the Ringling Brothers. Many of Robbins close friends were in attendance and you can bet that Frank A. networked with the best of them. While there, initial steps in forming a permanent Circus Protective Association were taken. An organizational committee was established whose responsibilities included perfecting the organization, drawing up a suitable constitution and by-laws, etc. Joseph T. McCaddon was chosen chairman with Charles Ringling, Frank A. Robbins and Charles Wilson committeemen. Obviously Robbins was well thought of by this elite assemblage of owners and executives.

By mid February, Mr. Robbins was successful in booking an impressive listing of performers. They included the Greggs, double leaping and looping the gap; Josie Ashton; Johnnie Rooney; Joe Cousins and his wife, Pearl, principle riders; Harry Rentz, mule hurdle; the Three Heumanns, trick bicyclist; the Four Gregorys, aerial bars; Two Elletts, trapeze; Billy Carroll and wife, trick mule (presumably not the wife), the Wentz Duo, gymnasts; Four Daros, aerial bars; the Kusters, hippodrome riders; Professor Rood, slack wire; Harry Koster, human fly and mail agent; El Nino Eddie, bounding wire; H. Inman, elephant posturing (contortionist on an elephant's back) and his wife Henrietta L Roberts, featured in the concert with her singing and soft shoe dancing; Mlle. Zenta,

Spanish web act; the Flying Lloyds; Albert Gaston, singing and talking clown; Charles Blitz, clown juggler; Willy Shrode, principal clown; John Dauphin, strongman balancing; Daredevil Donovan, looping the gap; with Jonathan Pruvic as the equestrian director. Frank Gregory and his Banda Rosa with 28 members provided music. In the side show, there appeared Mlle. Wonderly, snake enchantress; Flossie La Blanche, strong woman; Jean Foster, minstrel; Harry Shipman, minstrel; Young (Harry) Milo, expansionist; Daisy LeRoy, paper tearer; Ollie Griffin, mind reader; La Pearle, oriental dancer; Professor Andrews, Magician; Professor Sobline, Punch and Judy. Some of Frank Gregory's musicians provided music.

In the *Billboard* and the *Clipper* of March 25th, there were identical articles describing the sizing of the show. Although through pictures and subsequent newspaper articles, we know the canvas spread is somewhat exaggerated, it does provide a general description of the show's size. Big top, 150 ft round top with two 50 ft middles and one 40 ft middle; menagerie, 80 ft round top with five 50 foot middles; side show, 70 foot round top with two 30 foot middles; dressing room, 60 foot round top with a 30 foot extension; six stables 30 feet X 60 feet; two dining tents, 40 feet X 90 feet; one cook tent, 20 feet X 40 feet. From pictures and reports, it seems the big top was actually a three-pole affair, a 140/150 round top with two 50 foot middles. The menagerie probably only had three or four middles. Other tents and their number may also be overstated. At this time it was also reported Mr. Robbins just returned from St. Louis where he purchased two carloads of horses and one of ponies. It should be noted that these were short normal railroad stock cars and not circus stock cars. The business offices were removed from New York to the winter quarters in Clifton around this date.

One of the last acts in quarters was the populating of the menagerie. It was small by any standard. It had but one elephant, a seven year old,



A typical Robbins lithograph. Pfening Archives/

named Frank. A significant feature in 1905 and for years to come was a very large dromedary by name of Jerusalem. This animal plus a few others were purchased from Louis Rhue, a leading animal dealer from New York. The last animal of special interest was a giant sloth. The remainder of the menagerie was a small assortment of common big cats, birds and monkeys.

As spring approached, the Frank A. Robbins All Features Show was readied to make first impressions on the show-going public and hopefully with positive results at the ticket office. It wouldn't take a long time to determine if all this effort was worthwhile. Frank A. needed a very quick endorsement from the potential patrons from day one. Lacking this, he would never get out of New Jersey. He was now poised at the starting gate and the bell was about to go off.

1905-and they're off. Sometimes one doesn't have to travel very far to find success, and in the case of Robbins' opening, this was clearly the case. Passaic, New Jersey, is another fairly large manufacturing city just a few miles south of the winter quarters in Clifton. At the turn of the century it was prosperous and thriving. As the *Passaic Daily News* succinctly said it, "(t)he Frank A. Robbins circus. . . gave its first performance in this city last night (Wednesday, 4/26). The big tent was

packed to its utmost capacity, and the big audience witnessed one of the best performances of the kind ever given in Passaic." The article went on to discuss the performance but this was lifted directly from a prepared article written by the circus advance men. However, it continued with some additional information that was locally written. "The second performance was given this afternoon to a large audience, and the third and last will take place tonight on the grounds... where the big tents have been pitched since Sunday. The circus

employees are the most quiet and orderly aggregation of this nature that ever visited this city, and, although the circus, with its large retinue, has been quartered five days in the midst of a residential and business section, there has been no disturbance of any sort." Most likely, the show was hauled overland the few miles from quarters over several days and erected leisurely. The all-important weather was fine for the two-day engagement.

The *Clipper* of May 13th covered the opening. It confirmed much of the detail previously set forth. It also stated that "... (a)t the opening were many managerial faces, including the entire retired circus contingent of New York, as well as a generous contingent from Barnum & Bailey, paying a fraternal visit to shake the hand of the ever popular Frank A., and to wish him luck. ... The parade was conceded to be one of the finest ever seen in Passaic, and the artistic carving and gilding (executed during the Winter under the direction of Mr. Robbins and Lucius Foster) came in for much favorable comment. The big top, menagerie, dressing room, cook house and horse tents are brand new, the former being a150 with three 40's. Folding chairs, placed upon platforms are used as reserves, the old style board with hinged back being eliminated."

Rutherford was played the next day (4/28) to a very small afternoon (400 paid admissions) but with over 2,000 at night. The weather continued good. This was contrasted to rain at Orange (4/29) but business

held big at both performances. The jumps to Rutherford and Orange were about 10 miles. For the Monday stand at Morristown, about 30 miles to the west, the show arrived early Sunday morning. Little disruption to the normally quiet Sabbath morning took place as the circus personnel went about their business in perfect order. Morristowners turned out in droves as they packed the tents at night to standing room only. Excellent reviews of the performance were given with the acrobatic feats, trick bicycle riding and trained dogs on the tight rope garnering particular favorable mention. Clowning was good and the closing number of looping the gap was considered a showstopper. The paper was specifically appreciative of the excellent reserve seating. Circling back toward the east to Montclair (5/2), the good business and weather continued. The locals enjoyed the performance. Bergen County Seat, Hackensack, turned in excellent houses and provided the first insights into the parade consist. It witnessed two bands, an elephant, camel, horses, ponies, and a lion and lioness in separate cages with their trainers sitting therein.

The first relatively long jump of the season (50 plus miles) took the troupe to Middletown, New York (5/4). A late arrival of almost 9AM prevented the parade from going off. Excellent business was gained at both performances with over 3,000 paid at night. Kingston on the Hudson River followed to immense crowds who enjoyed the performance. Lots of country cousins descended from the nearby hills to see the parade and greatly enjoy the show. Another 50-mile jump north took the show to Schenectady for fine business on Saturday. Ringling followed Robbins by about 3 weeks in this locale. Good weather and big business were found at the Monday stand at Amsterdam on the Mohawk River. Several thousand came to the show-grounds on Sunday to watch the circus set up. A three-pole big top and a five-pole menagerie were mentioned. Then it was back east passing through the Albany yards to Hudson for a date on May 9th. The parade

did not take place until 2 o'clock in the afternoon. A last minute change of lots was the cause of the delay but not after the show had already commenced erecting its tents on the contracted lot, which was a cinder dump. A much more suitable pasture lot was substituted. Good attendance at both performances was registered. However, for the first time in this season, significant criticism was voiced regarding the condition of the horses. The management explained that their condition resulted from poor care by others during the winter and that the show was taking appropriate steps to correct this problem. More would be heard about this situation shortly. The show continued south along the east side of the Hudson for 55 miles to a date in Matteawan (Beacon), NY. Another late arrival occurred, this time as a result of a switchman's error in leaving Hudson. A crash ensued throwing some of the circus wagons off the train, damaging three. The wagons were reloaded rather quickly and the show arrived in Matteawan around 10AM. A late parade was given to good crowds in the street and the show had nothing to complain about at the box office at all. The Hunts Circus followed Robbins by 2 days (5/12). Once again the poor condition of the stock was observed. We must not forget that most of the audience owned horses and were often very sensitive to the horses' condition. Their educated eyes were not pleased



by what they saw. The show continued south reaching metropolitan New York City at Yonkers on Saturday, May 13th.

Business ranged from very good at Peekskill, large at Ossining (Sing Sing), to huge at Yonkers where standing room was at the premium. While transporting the show back to the train at night in Yonkers, a large wagon drawn by a six-mule team lost a wheel throwing the teamster to the

ground. He was not severely hurt but the incident delayed the departure somewhat. With the exception of some justified negative comments regarding the condition of the stock, a three week summary indicates that the show was doing big business at all stands, greatly pleasing the audience. It looked like Frank A's business plan was right on point. There was also a highly effective family plan. It should be noted that this enterprise was very much a family affair. In addition to wife, Mattie, and eldest son, Charles, contributing in key roles on the show, 23 year old son, Frank, was a general useful in the truest sense of the word, 12 year old daughter, Winona, who will be frequently heard from during the season, and youngest son, the 10 year old Milton, were all on the show.

It is apparent that Messrs Robbins and Beckmann were routing the show in territory that was played for years by both the Robbins and Sautelle circuses. Almost every date was scheduled in small cities and large towns, ranging in population from 5,000 to 50,000 with the predominant focus being between 10,000 and 20,000 residents with many more in the surrounding country side. Although Fred Beckmann may have been new to some of the municipalities, Robbins knew them all and personally was well thought of by the town fathers. At this stage of the season, his slicky boys were holding a low profile. Several towns on the route mentioned them but in a casual manner. Not too much excitement yet.

Another action by Robbins was significant in bringing his show to the attention of prospective patrons. New lithographs were generated for the season and were very attractive. The show's posters were as good as any in the business, and this included the big shows. He took the leadership role in doing something else to present his show in advance to the public: This was in his use of heralds. Heralds were around as long as circuses were traveling about these United States. Almost all were illustrated, many elaborately with sketches of acts and features. But Robbins went one big step further as he often used actual photographs on

the heralds. These photos were reproduced by the half tone method and showed very well on the cheap pulp herald paper. We are beneficiaries to this process. It is because of these heralds with photographs we know what the show looked like during the first few weeks of its opening season. We have a herald from the May 29th date at Willimantic, Connecticut, which contains a photo of the parked train, clearly from 1905. There is also a wonderful shot taken from an elevated position of the parade wagons in the backyard with Mattie and Frank A. in the foreground. Depicted are a number of cage wagons and the bandwagon that were used by the show for years. Puzzling are the 2 small elephants in the foreground as we know that the show only had the young elephant, Frank, at that time. It could be this picture was of the Sig Sautelle 1904 show before it added 5 elephants in mid season. However the bandwagon was on the Robbins show to be sure and not known to be on the Sautelle circus. It is possible that the smallest elephant may have been brought to the lot from a nearby Jersey City animal dealer for the photo taking. In any event, these shots were used in Robbins' heralds for years which contain at least one and very likely more photos taken in the first week of the show's life.

If the first three weeks were in the black side of the ledger, the next days had to be recorded in yet an undetermined color. Boffo business isn't too strong of a descriptor. It all started innocently at Mount Vernon, New York on Monday, May 15th. Arriving on Sunday, the show set up immediately. The parade took place on Monday morning as schedule and consisted of "many wagons, three bands of music, the elephant and the camel, the latter acting real frisky whenever a trolley car passed, and a number of open cage wagons from which animals looked forth." There were many watchers. Although the afternoon attendance was not quite capacity, in the evening," there wasn't even standing room, unless it was on the next block." The show received many kudos for the per-

formance. The next day at New Rochelle, the show played to big crowds at both performances despite the rain. At Stamford, the tent was strained to capacity with patrons pouring into the rings. In the evening Frank A. closed the ticket wagon at 7PM and thousands were turned away. There were over 2,000 admissions to the side show. There was some stress caused to the people in the seats because the folks standing around the rings blocked their views. Acts were curtailed. Aerial acts were performed over the heads of the patrons. There were fights between attendees in the seats. Ringmaster Curran was greeted with a shower of soda and peanuts when he attempted to remove the people from the rings. Looping the Gap was made to the peril of those below but he made it safely across. The show may have been good but most of those in the seats only saw the heads of the performers in the rings and had no idea what was going on. Many unhappy folks but not on the circus side. The press believed the show took more money out of the town than any other for a long, long



A few of the Robbins performers. Pfening Archives.

time. A short run of 10 miles took the circus to South Norwalk on the Long Island Sound: Another big day but without the turbulence of Stamford. Heading north up the Naugatuck

River Valley, Ansonia turned in two overflow houses to very pleased patrons with Looping the Gap being mentioned as a favorite. The show was given in 2 rings and a stage. During loading in Ansonia, a wagon was upset on the runs, which required over an hour to correct. What a week, gold and silver coins of the Realm for the taking and it was far from over. When it's good, it can be very, very good.

Even with the good news, negative press continued as it related to the condition of the horse stock. At New Rochelle on Tuesday (5/16), the local head of the ASPCA caused part of the parade to be cut out and had several of the drivers arrested. Four of the drivers, dressed up in fancy uniforms, were locked up and held until the local judge called the case late in the afternoon. It was charged that four of the horses suffered from sore necks and that the owner (Frank A.) had been warned previously in Yonkers to take care of this problem and he didn't. At the hearing, Frank A. promised that pads would be provided the injured horses. Meanwhile, a few miles away at Greenwich, Connecticut, the manager of L. W. Washburn, George Peck was arrested for hiring underage children to assist in erecting the show. The manager let himself loose to a crowd venting his opinion of Greenwich people and officials in such a manner that the Sheriff told him to stop, which he did not. He was arrested and jailed for disturbance of the peace and intoxication. Altogether a total of nine circus employees were locked up. It cost the management \$10 and court costs to reclaim its troop. In Norwalk and Ansonia the horse problem raised its ugly neck again.

Starting a new week in Naugatuck (5/22), the show made the fifteen-mile run north from Ansonia in good order, arriving early on Sunday. Unloading commenced immediately and the canvas spread on the ground. However the big top was not erected until Monday morning. Fine business ensued as it did the next day at Torrington. Trapeze, aerial and equestrian acts pleased the crowds and the closer, Looping the Gap con-

tinued to receive a great reception. Very short jumps to Bristol, New Britain, Meridan and Middletown were greeted with large attendance at all stops. In Meridan (5/26), the Gregory's made a big hit. Their seven-year-old daughter, Primmie, was particularly cited as being very special. The Henman's bicycling, the Cousins bareback riding and Zenta on the Spanish web were acclaimed. During the parade, a bicycle performer, who did all kinds of stunts on one wheel, was the center of attraction. Local hoodlums disturbed the loading process in Middletown by breaking their booze bottles against the sides of the circus train until the railroad officials ran them off. Loading was furthered delayed by another accident on the runs when the block and fall slipped, seriously injuring the team driver, cutting his head badly. During the morning unloading at Middletown, the eagle float overturned, so it wasn't a good day coming or going for the train crew. In the meantime, Frank A. was advertising in the *Clipper* (5/27) for additional riders, Japanese performers, side show talkers and a lady aerial act.

Staying in Connecticut (why leave?), the circus opened the week in Willimantic (5/29), then New London, and finally exited from Norwich (5/31). At Norwich, the local press noted that the performance was in one ring. All acts were well received. The Looping the Gap cyclist was injured in performing his stunt in the afternoon but recovered sufficiently to accomplish the trick at night. At Westerly, Rhode Island (6/1), a late arrival and only fair business broke the string of great days. It had to happen some time. Still the press had very positive comments about the performance, although it stated that the riding was conspicuous by its absence. The Robbins circus remained in Rhode Island until its Newport stand (6/5), drawing well at almost every stand. The show entered Massachusetts at Hyannis (6/6) for a couple of weeks in that Commonwealth. At Plymouth (6/8), the weather was very nasty with temperatures below 40 degrees, a strong 30plus mph wind and a driving rain. Notwithstanding, the

afternoon was fairly well attended and the night performance was strawed Business continued to be big at many stands. Quincy (6/9), Milford (6/10) and Lynn (6/17) were especially well attended. Gloucester (6/19) also registered big business but only fair reviews. Robbins was still doing it, fighting the elements and more in the process. Ringling was in Massachusetts at the same time as the Robbins show was circling Boston, ensconced in that great city for a week in mid-June. Not only that, but Ringling was less than two weeks behind Robbins at Newport,



Fitchburg, Lynn and Salem, all very good stands for Robbins.

In the *Clipper* and *Billboard*, (6/10) Robbins advertised for a master and assistant master of transportation. It may be that the numerous late arrivals and accidents at the runs were the result of unsatisfactory performance on the part of the incumbents. During the same time period, a very interesting publication made its introduction on the show lot. Dated June 17th, the first edition of the shows sponsored newspaper, the *Tent City News* hit the street. The editor was J. C. Banks. It was four pages in length and consisted of news items on the show, appropriate photographs, and contained some ads. Certain events that took place were noted. Short articles on individuals who were on the show were also presented. It was professionally put together and is very readable today. Winona, Frank A.'s daughter, contributed juvenile column, which covered the doings of the younger set on the circus. Her comments on her brother, Milton, and half-brother, Frank, reveals a warmth toward both elements of her Father's divided family. Those familiar with the history of Sig Sautelle will recognize this publication as it is duplicative in format and style to that published on the Sautelle circus in the 1904 season.

The *Tent City News* cost 5 cents a copy and appears to be worth every cent charged.

The *Clipper* advised on June 24 that the menagerie had been increased by the addition of four cages but had lost a hyena. In the same article it was noted an engine at Fitchburg struck one of the elephant men and amputation of both legs was required. About the same time, the *Tent City News* indicated that two stocks and a flat to handle the new menagerie animals and the addition of draft horses enlarged the train. Being published to the people on the show for their consumption, it is difficult to discount this alleged enlargement. However there is serious question whether the show ever exceeded 16 cars. Perhaps these additions brought the actual count to the 16 cars that were confirmed by local newspapers later in the year.

Robbins and Beckmann then directed the circus north into Maine for well over a month. At a number of the larger cities, Ringling continued right behind until Bangor (Robbins 6/30)--(Ringling 7/8) whereupon the bigger show headed toward Montreal. Throughout many of the stands in Maine, the Hargreaves Circus, which was about the same size as Robbins, also provided considerable competition.

Former partner and working colleague, John Holmes, visited in Ellsworth. Holmes was instrumental in rescuing the Frank A. Robbins Circus during its financial distress after the 1888 season, and was the figurehead leading the show during the ill-fated 1889 season. Messrs. Robbins and Holmes worked together as seat butchers in the 1870's. Business in Maine was generally good with an especially fine day registered at Eastport on the day prior to Independence Day. It was being reported in the trade papers that circus business generally had taken a decided dip in recent weeks. While Robbins' tally did not equal the heady days in Connecticut (what could?), the circus was in the black on most days. As a matter of note, while at Eastport, the entire crew of the U.S.S. Florida attended the afternoon performance. The Florida, a monitor, was anchored in the middle of the

harbor in clear view of the lot. A very significant event was the announcement that the excellent riding act of the Costello's joined the show at Oldtown (7/7). This family was considered one of the best in the business and performed four separate acts during the performance, greatly strengthening the overall presentation. Meanwhile, brothers Charles and Frank Jr. created an oriental dancing show that exhibited on the midway. It was being well received by the public, particularly by the male persuasion.

The extended tour throughout Maine literally took the show to all corners of the state. Commencing at Biddeford (6/23), just north of Portsmouth, NH, the circus was initially routed into the population centers in the southeastern then to the south central areas. Major towns and cities such as Portland (6/24), Bath (6/27), Augusta (6/28) and Bangor (6/30) were visited. Then the show took a mighty leap to Eastport, the eastern most town in the United States, in the northeast corner of Maine. Heading northwest along the New Brunswick (Canadian) border, Frank A. picked up Calais (7/4), and Danforth (7/5), dropped inland for a couple of dates before resurfacing on the Canadian border again at Fort Fairfield (7/13). The circus reached its northernmost date when it played Fort Kent (7/17). While at this locale, the Sunday layover was spent repainting stakes, poles, platforms, ticket boxes and revarnishing rolling stock. Red was the predominant color but a fair amount of circus blue was also in evidence. There wasn't much else to do anyway. You just can't go any more north than this and still remain in the universe. Many of the towns being played at this time were very small and had to depend upon woodsmen and families coming out of the forest to see the show in order to break even. Some towns did and some didn't. Remarkably, by playing so many burghs, the jumps were often 30 miles or less. On the other hand, going from nowhere to nowhere doesn't pay when there are too few folks at either location. Sometimes you had to provide your own excitement. For instance, at Island Falls (7/19) while

at the runs at night, the pole wagon was backed through the door of a private house; and the next day at Brownville, a side show wagon on the way off the lot sideswiped the ticket wagon causing a fair amount of damage to both. The Island Falls event was particularly troublesome because the show had already lost the night performance because of heavy rains.

In any event, after Fort Kent, the show was routed south toward the central Maine area. It played larger villages now, such locations as Dover-Foxcroft (7/22) and Sknowhegan (7/27). However less the reader gets the wrong impression, these were still wild and woolly locations. At Farmington (7/31), it started raining in the morning and continued pelting the circus for 42 straight hours.



Surprisingly Farmington's business wasn't too bad considering. Finally as August began, Robbins reached the southwestern part of the state playing Rumford Falls (8/2) and exiting to New Hampshire after Hiram (8/4). It seems as if Robbins was buying time, escaping the very tough competition extant in southern New England while merely holding his own in reaches where only one show per year could possibly play, if that many. During this Maine tour, Frank A. was still seeking one or two strong acts, either ground or aerial, to add to the performance (7/29 *Billboard*).

The short tour in New Hampshire started in the shadow of the impressive White Mountains at North Conway. Heading directly south, Robbins picked up fairly large communities such as Nashua (8/9), on the Massachusetts border, Peterborough (8/12) and Keene (8/15), before exiting at Winchester (8/16). Although almost all of the nine New Hampshire dates previously had one or more circuses, in the main they

were still more than one month fresh and OK business was had. The show picked up a few dates in Massachusetts, leaving the Bay State at Great Barrington (8/21) which is almost on the New York State line. Heading directly south into Connecticut, the circus reached Danbury (8/24) where it was greeted by good business in the afternoon but lost the night performance because of heavy rains. This was contrasted to the next day at Brewster, New York, where the rains continued in deluge proportions. The circus struggled to get on the lot but did so for an afternoon attendance of only 850 brave souls. The slicky boys did not let the slim crowd affect their take as one game took the locals for more than \$400. The night show was canceled in order to get off the lot to make the next date at the large Hudson River city of Poughkeepsie where the attendance was only fair. The press did observe that the tent was well ventilated and very well lighted. Frank A. crossed the Hudson and continued west for another 40 miles for its Monday date at Ellenville. Business was light. Continuing northwest in relatively short jumps, the circus gained New Berlin on Saturday (9/2) before journeying to Norwich for a Monday date that was never made.

On early Sunday morning, the circus arrived on schedule in Norwich and commenced the unloading and setup, which was completed in a timely fashion. As the Norwich Sun headlined it "Terrible Storm of Sunday Night Left Ruin and Devastation. In Its Path—Floods Followed in Wake of Storm." An extensive article followed discussing the great damage done to the area because of the storm including several deaths. As applied to the circus, it said, "(a)t the fairgrounds yesterday things were in a most deplorable state. . . . water ranged from three to nine feet in depth. The Frank A. Robbins Circus, which was to have exhibited here Monday, arrived Sunday morning. The show people were obliged to work all day (Monday) waist deep in water to take down their tents and apparatus and convey them to the street. Large crowds throughout the day witnessed

this operation. The canvass men were heavy losers by the storm. The men were paid off Sunday afternoon and the majority of them left money in their coat pockets when they went to sleep Sunday night. About 10 o'clock they were awakened by revolver shots fired by one of the managers of the company. Then they found that the grounds were covered with water and that in a number of cases their clothing had floated away down the stream. ...It is estimated that the total loss to the circus caused by the flood and enforced idleness will be between \$3,500 and \$5,000. One small tent belonging to the circus disappeared Sunday night and has not been seen since nor can any trace of it be found. The circus was to have given performances at Hamilton today (9/5) but owing to their inability to get their wagons loaded, in time, they canceled that engagement and will exhibit tomorrow in Cazenovia."

The *Tent City News* supplemented the above information by the following. "For a time it was a question whether or not the bale rings of the big top would be immersed. The ponies and all menagerie animals, except those in cages, were hurriedly taken to the cars and anchors were thrown around property likely to float away. Rowboats were pressed into service and all of the men worked in water up to their armpits in tearing down the tops and packing up. Great difficulty was experienced in getting the cages and wagons off the lot and it was not until nearly noon Tuesday that the last one reached the runs. About the only damage, other than the loss of two day's business was to the dining tent, which was badly torn. In consequence diners occupied seats around the tables with only nature's canopy for a covering."

Cold and damp days greeted the show in both Cazenovia (9/6) and DeRuyter (9/7) which literally put a damper on business. Just when the weather was getting the troupe down a bit, a bright clear day at Cortland (9/8) made life much more palatable. Two good houses were to be had and the Cortland Standard had many fine things to say about Robbins and his show. The paper recalled that he

spent an entire winter (1902) in Cortland putting together the Sig Sautelle railer at Homer only a couple of miles away. The paper went on to say that Robbins purchased part of the equipment from Sautelle last fall. The flood at Norwich was discussed in detail. It noted that much material for the Robbins show came from local dealers including the tin ware and kitchen utensils, and the seats, jacks, horses and everything of wood. Of course the performance was addressed and done so in a most positive manner. There were two rings and an elevated stage and all were occupied almost all of the time. Clowning, trapeze, ground tumbling, and strong men and women were lauded. The trick bicycling act (Henmans) with the young child were nothing short of marvelous. And the band of 21 pieces was excellent. All of this fine news was tempered by the fact that Mlle. Zenta (Spanish web) fell during the afternoon performance. She landed on her head, neck and shoulders with a thud. She was picked up unconscious, bleeding profusely from the mouth, nose and ears. She suffered a fracture of her skull and other serious injuries and local physicians had only slight hope for her recovery. They underestimated the good circus blood running through her veins because within the fortnight she was

Fred Beckmann, agent and later circus and carnival owner. Pfening Archives.



reining supreme again high above the center ring.

Throughout this central New York tour, the powerful Carl Hagenbeck Circus was following Frank A. Robbins at many of the dates by two weeks. Hagenbeck newspaper ad placements were not only more frequent, but much larger. This must have had an impact on business. As would be expected, Robbins continued on with the determination that a bit of competition was good for the soul if not for the business. During the New York tour he added around fifteen draft horses in dlibs and drabs thereby improving the parade presentation as well as the ability to transit the equipment to and from the lots. Now each cage was augmented with a tin sign that was neatly lettered describing the contents and the origin of the species. As with any progressive new show, its gets better and better throughout its initial tour.

The last date in New York was Dryden (9/11), midway between Cortland and Ithaca. The night performance was lost because of another downpour. Two weeks in Pennsylvania followed with the opening date being Sayre (9/12) just inside the border of the Keystone State. The showground was ideally located but very small, necessitating erecting the sideshow with only a single pole and leaving out three middles out of the menagerie. Loading out of Sayre, the pole wagon overturned substantially delaying the departure of the train until 7 a. m. the next morning. It took about an hour to cover the 25 miles south to the next stand of Towanda. As a result of this very late arrival, the parade was canceled. In lieu thereof, the Banda Rossa band was sent downtown and gave a free concert. In turn a very large crowd followed the band back to the lot where the side show opened shortly after 2 p. m. and the menagerie shortly thereafter. It was a pretty good day after a terrible start. Hagenbeck continued to follow Robbins by about two weeks at Pittston (9/15) but business was good there. The performance was lauded with Leaping the Gap receiving special mention once again. The next day at Nanticoke loomed to be a

bloomer because of an epidemic of typhoid. Deaths from this dreaded affliction ranged from 3 to 5 daily and over 250 cases then registered. By request, no music was played during the parade. Amazingly, the show drew a fair house in the afternoon and a big one at night. As typhoid was highly contagious, it is little wonder that it was rampant in this town. Bad railroad handling accounted for another very late arrival at Mifflinburg (9/20). With the spirited cooperation of the entire troupe, the parade was only a wee late and the shows went on exactly on schedule. However business was just so-so, as it seemed that most folks were awaiting the start of the big fair, which was to commence shortly. This whole scenario was repeated two days later at Hanover. Squeezed in the middle of these two dates was Lykens, which enjoyed tremendous business by all units on the show. The mines were closed down for the big day. On September 23rd, the circus visited the site of the greatest battle of the Civil War, Gettysburg. Many of the show personnel took advantage of the opportunity to walk the battleground, which was a real vivid memory to many on the show as it took place a short 42 years previous. Meanwhile the locals visited the show in goodly numbers and rated it as a fine one. The Pennsylvania tour was closed out with Chambersburg (9/25) and nearby Waynesboro (9/26). Excellent business was had at both locations. The band received high praise and the overall performances were greatly appreciated. In Chambersburg, the local sheriff commented that there were more drunken roustabouts on Robbins than any other show he had ever seen. Apparently they were paid on the way to this town and preceded to liberally spend their hard earned loot at the local gin mills. This activity in turn earned them about 30 days in jail to sober up.

Heading southeast for about 50 miles, the show entered Maryland and played Westminster (9/27). Frederick, Rockville and Annapolis followed this date. Today, Rockville is

very much a suburb of the Nation's Capital. In 1905, it was probably way out in the sticks. While in Annapolis, La Pearl, a female impersonator in the side show slapped a woman in the audience who made fun of him. Mr. Robbins fined him a week's pay. In addition, the woman swore out a warrant against La Pearl. In order to prevent LaPearl from skipping town, the police sent another circus employee to get the appropriate amount of money from LaPearl's trunk. This employee took the entire stash of money, alleged to be \$140, and hit the road. Now LaPearl had to appeal to the police to find the culprit and hopefully get back some of his savings.

With the advent of October, the season was rapidly coming to its conclusion. The show was now routed north to make the turn into the Delmarva Peninsula at Elkton (10/6). Business continued good at most stands. At Havre de Grace which is located at the mouth of the Susquehanna River as it empties into the Chesapeake Bay, business was very good. The performance received average reviews. It was noted that each child was escorted by four adults who attended to ensure that the child enjoyed the show. Heading south on the Peninsula, good days and reviews were registered at Centerville (10/7) and Chestertown (10/9). Unfortunately at Cambridge (10/11), the afternoon performance drew around 1,200 but the evening was canceled because of a savage storm. Some of the big top canvas was seriously torn. In addition, a draft horse broke its leg during teardown and had to be shot. The circus got as far south as Salisbury (10/14) heading back north to close the season at the state capitol of Delaware, Dover (10/19). It was then back to the winter quarters at Clifton, New Jersey, where it all started some six months earlier.

Both Frank A. Robbins and Fred Beckmann claimed to have experienced a very good season. Maybe so. It certainly started off with a bang with the first month and a half probably having no losing days and most dates ranging between big and enor-

mous. Competition from the Ringling show didn't appear to affect business in any way. Seldom has a new show ever experienced such a wonderful start. Robbins also claimed that Maine was very good with a mix of \$2,000 days thrown in. The better guess is that there were only a few \$2,000 days, two being Eastport and Houlton. The show also played some very small burgs where \$2,000 was closer to the annual income for the entire population rather than an expenditure of discretionary income. Competition from the Thomas Hargreaves Circus was characterized as spirited. Then the show ran into 15 days of consecutive rain that culminated in the flood at Norwich, New York. Competition from the Hagenbeck Circus also impeded business during this time. Business seemed to pick up again in Pennsylvania and Maryland and the show closed on a plus note. All in all, our best estimate is that the show held a big lead at the start, slowed down somewhat at the far hum, got its second wind as it moved toward home, and came home a winner by a sore neck. But a winner is a winner by any definition and Frank A. proved that he could still do it.

And there more good news of a personal nature, Frank A. had his entire family about turn working or in the case of Milton, playing on the show. Wife, Mattie, performed her customary fine role as the manager of privileges. Daughter, Winona, had proven herself to be mature beyond her tender years and contributed in a very adult fashion assisting her mother on the concessions and writing in a very skilled fashion for the *Tent City News*. Eldest son Charles assumed the role of assistant manager and accomplished all that could be expected in that position. Second son, Frank Jr, was generally useful filling in the performance where needed and around the lot as the opportunity arose. Last son, Milton, was but a lad of ten, and probably had the time of his life on the show lot. He probably had the best season of all. In summary, the bifurcated family performed admirably as a unit undoubtedly greatly pleasing Robbins. In retrospect, it was a mighty good year at that.



The Circus Historical Society 2001 Convention

The Circus Historical Society 2001 convention was held in Baraboo, Wisconsin July 6 to 10.

CHS members and guests from twenty-four states, Canada and Australia began to arrive at the Baraboo Valley Inn on Friday July 6, 2001. Most quickly headed at once to the runs above the Circus World Museum grounds to watch the loading of the Great Circus Train. Conditions were perfect for photographs and many a roll of film was expended in recording the historic event.

Early the following morning those who had arranged to ride the train flocked to the crossing where many of our number greeted Charles P "Chappie" Fox, CHS No.161 and the man who once dared to dream that the day of the horse-drawn circus parade had not ended. We were soon comfortably seated in the Wisconsin & Southern cars and rolled out promptly at 8:30. Following what the writer still thinks of as the old Chicago & North Western line to Madison, we proceeded on the old Milwaukee Road tracks to Stoughton, where we left the train and boarded air-conditioned buses back to Baraboo. A continental brunch and a "Po Boy" lunch had been served en route, along with assorted beverages. It was thrilling to see the crowds along the track waving at the circus train; of course we waved back. The generator powering the air conditioner in our cars bogged down but all took it in good spirits and not one request for an adjustment was received by our secretary.

Our buses deposited us at the museum and all were on their own until that evening when the Duggan-Maley Tent of the CFA (the Atlanta tent) hosted a party for all. New arrivals were greeted and many old friendships renewed as glasses were raised in the fellowship of our odd band.

At 9:30 on Sunday morning, the

formal presentations began in the Feld Theater of the Circus World Museum as President Richard Reynolds welcomed the group to the 2001 convention. Our secretary presided at the session and the first morning speaker was David Carlyon with "Confession of a Ringling Clown," about his early schooling in the art of clowning and of the masters of the art who mentored him. Next was Deborah Walk of the Ringling Museum of the American Circus in Sarasota, who spoke on "The Gilded Legacy of a Circus King: The Art of making and Spending Money," a fascinating tale of the late life of John Ringling and his efforts to leave a worthwhile legacy in the form of his magnificent art collection. Debby then introduced the new Director of the Ringling Museums, Dr. John Wetenhall, who briefly addressed the group on his plans and hopes for the museums. Closing the morning session was new member Bob Heber, who told of his family's Heber Bros Shows, illustrated by many slides made from family photographs. Bob dressed like one of the original brothers, who was known in his late years by his white Panama suit and the monkey on his shoulder. Bob's monkey was better behaved than some.

David Carlyon presided at the afternoon session, which led off with Fred Dahlinger's extremely well researched presentation on "Herbert L. Witt & Sons, an Obscure Circus Wagon Builder."

We were next enthralled by what was the most legend shattering and history re-writing paper presented before our convention by Stuart Hicks of Perth, Australia. He not only won the award for having come the farthest, but proceeded to drop our jaws by demonstrating that for one hundred twenty years we had all been thoroughly "Barnumed."

Using the miraculously surviving correspondence between Barnum and partner-in-waiting James L Hutchinson (miraculous in that Barnum had written "destroy this letter" and like instructions across the more sensational pieces). Hicks disclosed that the conventional chronicle of the founding of Barnum & London, AKA Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson, was in fact one of P. T.'s finest pieces of deceiving the public, not to mention possibly his most astounding example of business strategy. If one among us still clung to the fable that Barnum's only contribution to the Greatest Show on Earth was his name, that belief was forever shattered. We hope this captivating paper will see publication in this journal. We won't dwell on it further.

John Polacsek next brought us a tale of the constant struggles and rare triumphs of a wagon show agent as told through the correspondence to and from the advance with his "Letters from an Agent." This brought the first day's activities to a close except for the trustees, meeting, covered elsewhere.

John McConnell opened the second day of papers by introducing Jim Alexander of the St. Louis Zoo. He reminded our secretary that when he joined the CHS, the secretary had written him, "You probably aren't old enough to have known Jules Jacot. As it turned out Alexander was at the zoo for several years before Jacot left and he knew the man well. Jim's "A History of Animal Shows at the St Louis Zoo" detailed the various animal presentations which came and in time were phased out.

David Carlyon returned to the

Speakers Jim Alexander, John Polacsek and Stuart Hicks. All photos by Fred Pfening.





Part of the auction audience waiting to bid.

microphone with "What Dan Rice Taught me about Performance," an interesting tale of the king of jesters and his unconventional approach to spreading joy and delight.

Fred Dahlinger also returned and presented "From Horse Power to Horsepower: the Transition from Baggage Stock to Caterpillars." It was illustrated by appropriate slides.

Fred Pfening, III, hosted the afternoon session that began with John McConnell's businesslike analysis of his own "Circus Royale," which toured several years ago.

Next came Judith Griffin, another researcher (and relative) of James L. Hutchinson, who revealed more of what she had begun telling us last year with "Sawdust Gold: The James L. Hutchinson Story." "Hutch" paid his dues by toiling in a number of circus positions before reaching that of owner. Incidentally Judy and Stuart met on a Hutchinson genealogy website on the Internet where each had gone after beginning investigating the subject independently (and that tidbit is only a part of the fascinating tale behind this ongoing inquiry).

Our evening activity was the annual auction of circus memorabilia for the benefit of *Bandwagon*. Col. John Polacsek took his accustomed position behind the podium and with the obliging assistance of Ray Gronso, Alan Campbell, Ed Todd and Dominic Yodice. Polacsek managed to move \$3,388.00 in rare relics, gorgeous graphics and essential ephemeral. Bob and Susan Sabia kept tabs on the affair and wore out two calculators and twenty fingers in tallying the take. Al Stencell provided the usual security by stick-

ing to the secretary like the offal of owls until the legal tender was safely under lock and key.

The last morning began with host Fred Dahlinger bringing on our president Richard Reynolds with "Hold your Horses--Here Come the Elephants." The heart of the paper dealt with elephants in Atlanta's history but by extension much of the lore of the circus elephant in America was touched upon.

Closing the formal presentations was a highly productive joint effort by Bob Sabia and Ernest Albrecht on the post-war Ringling-Barnum specs. Sabia has amassed the preeminent collection of color slides pertaining to the subject and Albrecht has spent many years studying the costuming, floats and themes of these extravaganzas. Sabia began with a brief history of the development of photography and particularly of the color photography which had made this showing possible and Albrecht then narrated the showing of several hundred slides tracing the specs through the incumbencies of several directors and designers.

The afternoon was free and many enjoyed the excellent performance of the tented circus on the museum grounds. As this article is not intended as a performance review we must every year condense our remarks into a few words so we generally select one notable act or performer to mention. In the limited space allotted and without intending to slight any of the outstanding performers at this year's show we will simply quote our members who, on leaving the big top asked, "Isn't that Roman Tomanov fantastic?"

A number of CHSers went to the Circus World Museum Library and Research Center to delve into the vast amount of circus history on file there. All seats were occupied and each person had materials piled high on the table in front of them. Erin Foley and Meg Allen provided yeomen service in digging out the

special requests.

The annual banquet at Papa's Place, Baraboo Valley Inn, brought this year's festivities to a close. This is the first time for several years that we recall hearing only good comments about the food. Father Jerry Hogan offered the traditional blessing by addressing "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," which we thought very appropriate in our mixed gathering. Fred Pfening, III, delivered the banquet address on "The American Circus: an Interpretive Overview," a well researched and presented paper on the development of the American circus, particularly the rail show, and included a high watermark in 1911 when twenty-six such shows played and a low point with the 1944 Hartford fire, which took the giant in the field eight years to pay off.

President Reynolds introduced and thanked a number who had participated in the convention, announced the nominations for office in the fall election and wished all well until next year.

TRUSTEES' MEETING 2001

President Richard J. Reynolds III called the annual Trustees' meeting to order the evening of Sunday July 8, 2001, in the conference room of Baraboo's Baraboo Valley Inn. Also present were Trustees Secretary/Treasurer Dave Price; Vice-President Al Stencell, Fred D. Pfening, III, Fred D. Pfening, Jr. John McConnell, Fred Dahlinger, John Polacsek, Robert Sabia and trustees emeritus Joseph Bradbury and Stuart Thayer.

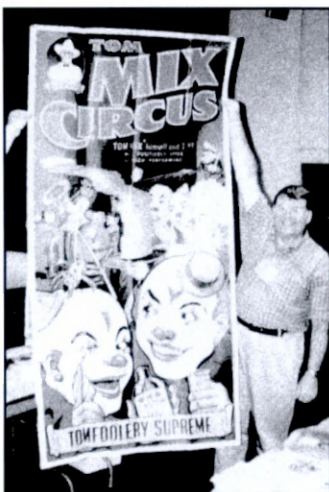
Reynolds began by announcing that the preliminary convention figures indicated that with sixty-three members and twenty-five spouses, and

The auction team, Ed Todd, Alan Campbell and Dominic Yodice.



guests in attendance, we would have a successful as well as enjoyable convention.

Allen Campbell holding a Tom Mix three-sheet litho sold at the auction.



Reynolds then called upon Secretary-Treasurer Price to pass out treasurer's statements of the 2000-2001 year and to respond to questions. All seemed pleased with our financial position.

Reynolds next asked Bob Sabia to report on his project of soliciting new members. Of the forty-four new members we have added since the last convention, twenty-one of them have come in as a direct result of having been contacted by Sabia. There was then some discussion, led by Sabia, regarding the various groups, which he planned to approach in the ensuing year.

Pfening, III, suggested that Bob Sugarman's recently published list of circus schools would be an excellent source of possible members. Stencell and Dahlinger brought up the importance of making the CHS known to students in college programs related to the circus. On the motion of Pfening III, as amended by Pfening, Jr, Sabia was authorized to do whatever he deemed justified in reaching the aforementioned prospects, including sending sample copies of *Bandwagon* when needed.

Reynolds next brought up the matter of election of trustees and officers. He announced that five 8-year trustees' positions would require filling at the next election and that Dahlinger, McConnell, Pfening, Jr., Polacsek and Sabia had all expressed a willingness to remain in those positions. On motion of Thayer, the five were all nominated and their names will appear on the ballot.

In the matter of officers, Reynolds stated that he had approached and found willing to run for office the following: Al Stencell for President, Robert Sabia for Vice President, and Dave Price for Secretary-Treasurer. On the motion of Pfening, Jr., the

slate was nominated and these names will also appear on the fall ballot.

President Reynolds stated that he would draft a ballot, which will be printed in post card format and mailed in the July-August issue of *Bandwagon*. He also appointed Guy Fiorenza as Election Commissioner.

Reynolds next called on Dave Price to report on the success of the recent change in ad-

vertising companies. Price reported that he was very well pleased with the new firm and that complaints from members had all but vanished. It was recalled that in the past there had been problems with members not getting their *Bandwagons* due to faulty addressing when the business was given to the former company.

Reynolds asked for comments on the matter of a web site and after some discussion he suggested that the matter be tabled for the time being.

Reynolds then called attention to the need to amend the Code of Regulations in two respects. Under the present language of the Code, the Trustees have implied authority to fill an office in the event of a vacancy; Reynolds suggested that this authority be made explicit with the addition of the following addition to Article V. 115.09. Any vacancy in an office, whether by death, resignation or otherwise, shall be filled by the Board of Trustees. The person appointed to fill the vacancy will serve for the unexpired term of the predecessor in the office until his or her successor is duly elected and qualified.

Additionally to facilitate "Action by

Consent" as set forth in paragraph 6.02 of the Code so as to take advantage of modern facsimile communication and electronic mail, Reynolds suggested that the following should be added to paragraph 6.02: "Any consent in writing contemplated or allowed herein may be provided or furnished via facsimile communication or electronic mail." On the motion of Price, both amendments passed.

There was some discussion regarding the need for a planned giving program specifically with an eye toward the possible future need for a paid *Bandwagon* editor.

Additionally there was a brief discussion about our participation in the Chadwyck-Healey/Bell & Howell information and learning program. In the past year there has been some activity with \$67.10 royalties being paid us.

Fred Dahlinger rose to express on behalf of the entire society and of the Board in particular our appreciation to President Reynolds for his untiring efforts and our congratulations for his resounding success during his four years as president. The meeting ended on a round of applause for his comments. -Dave Price.

AMERICA'S DAREDEVIL BALLOONIST

by James W. Raab

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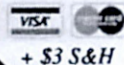
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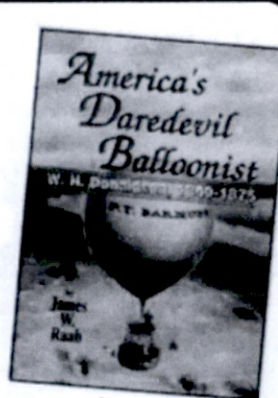
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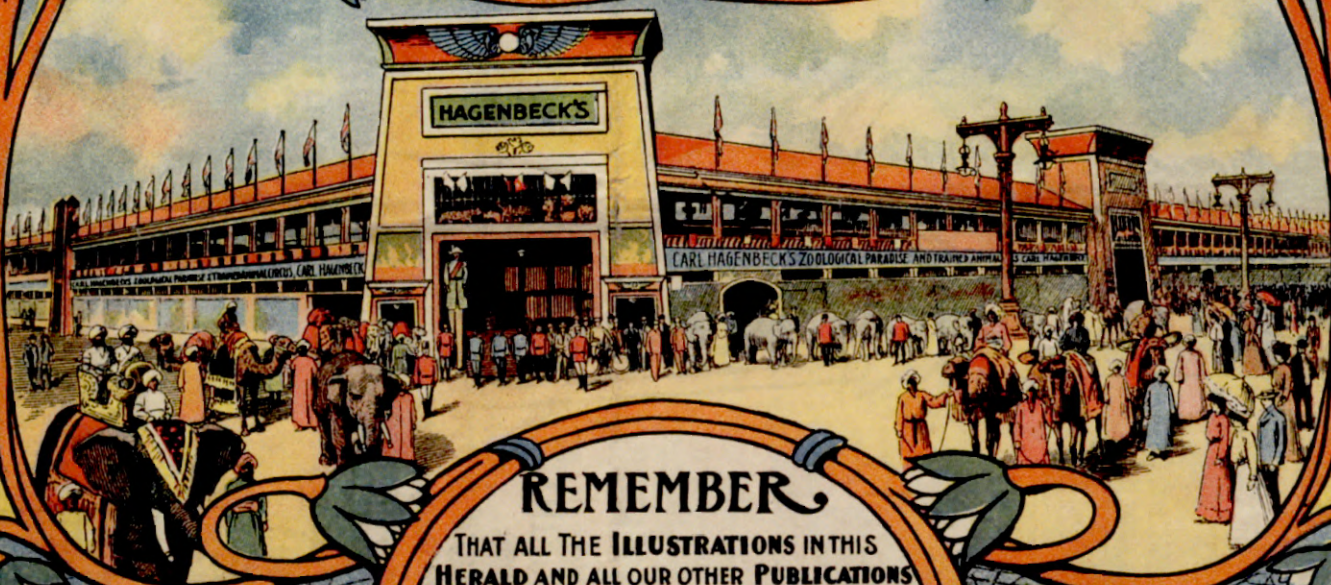
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